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[This is the web site of the reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain who were expelled from the Clapham-based Socialist Party in May 1991 for using the name “The Socialist Party of Great Britain” in our propaganda as required by Clause 6 of The Object and Declaration of Principles formulated in 1904 to which we agree. We reconstituted ourselves as The Socialist Party of Great Britain in June 1991. Any money given to us for literature or support is in recognition that we are not the Clapham based Socialist Party at 52 Clapham High Street and any mistakes will be rectified.]

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Barriers To Socialism: Charities

Ordinarily, the ideas and beliefs which act as barriers to the urgent need to establish socialism emanate from parents, teachers, politicians, academics, teachers and priests. One insidious barrier to the dissemination of socialist ideas is the existence of hundreds of charities who misleadingly claim that capitalism can be reformed to end poverty and war.

The facts are not in dispute:

- The world's three richest people control more wealth than all 600 million people in the world's poorest countries
- 2.8 billion people - nearly half the world's population - live on less than £1.20 a day. One in five survives on less than 65p per day.
- Every day, 30,000 children die as a result of extreme poverty.
- Each day, 50,000 people die of hunger and preventable illnesses. (THE INDEPENDENT, 1 June 2005)

All totally unnecessary. All caused by capitalism and private property ownership, where production takes place for profit.

What was in dispute was what to do about it. From the various pronouncements of Saint Geldof and other celebrities, it was clear that the organisers of Live 8 do not understand capitalism and the function of capitalist politicians in serving the interests of the capitalist class. The mere efforts of Live 8 and the demonstrations at Gleneagles, where the G8 politicians were meeting, far from the madding crowd would not end poverty but would only act as a barrier against socialism.

What better platform could there be than to say at a pop concert, in front of millions of people, that capitalism causes poverty, politicians cannot and will not do anything about it, and that the solution is for the world's inhabitants to set about establishing a social system where social need will be met? But this message was not heard except from a tiny group of socialists denied access to the media, and denied the attention to enjoyed by Geldof and his celebrity chums. Instead of sound socialist arguments against capitalism, there were the inflated and self-important egos of celebrities, pointless marching, empty slogans, forgettable music, and inevitable disappointment when the charity lobby failed yet again to solve world poverty.

The charity lobby could not even get their own act in order. Anti-poverty groups recently launched the naïve and empty gesture known as “*Make Poverty History*”. They asked supporters to wear white wrist-bands to demonstrate their support for the cause. Dreary celebrities, like Dawn French, Richard Wilson and Kirsty Gallagher, and opportunistic politicians like Tony Blair and Charles Kennedy, all jumped on the band-wagon, surreptitiously displaying the white wrist-band at photo opportunities.

Now, it appears that the white wrist-bands used by the “*Make Poverty History*” (MPH) coalition of charities are made using forced labour in China. The working conditions violated even China's own minimal health and safety laws.

“*We were stupid*”, said Dominic Nutt of Christian Aid (INDEPENDENT, 30 May 2005). Yes, the MPH coalition were stupid. Not so much for using forced labour in the production of the white wrist-bands but in believing that the actions of charities can end poverty.

“*Make capitalism history*” should have been the slogan (a phrase now unfortunately hi-jacked by the capitalist left and anarchist groups). But to make capitalism history would require conscious and political *socialist* action from the working class, which both the charities and the vanguard capitalist left, etc., all reject as unnecessary. They refuse to believe that, before you can end poverty, you first have to abolish capitalism.

Poverty flows from the wages system. Poverty is caused by commodity production and exchange for profit. It is caused because the means of production are owned and controlled by a minority class, who appear invisible in the charity coalition's literature.

The only framework in which poverty can be ended and peoples' needs met is the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

To make poverty history first requires the formation of a world-wide socialist majority. But against this force for freedom from capital is the barrier of the charities, those who work for them and those who give them their support.

This includes the Live 8 event. Nowhere does the failure of charities to effect an end to poverty can be seen better than in the revival, after 20 years, of a pop concert led by Bob Geldof. Those who learn nothing from history are condemned to repeat their mistakes again.

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Look Forward to a Better Future: Become a Socialist

For millions of years, the Earth has sustained a wonderfully rich and interconnected web of life. Now one social system - capitalism - is putting it all at risk.

The world's climate is changing... the air and water is no longer clean and pure... species are dying out at a terrifying rate... people everywhere suffer from pollution and environmental damage caused by the profit motive.

It doesn't need to be like this. For more than a century, The SPGB has demonstrated that social reforms, like the ones proposed by environmental groups, cannot solve the problems facing the world's working class.

What is required is a social revolution to replace a polluting and exploiting social system with a socialist social system in which production takes place to meet human needs.

Only socialism can balance producing for human need with environmental concerns. Only the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution, by all of society, can ensure a balance between the social and natural environments.

However, Socialism cannot be established in one country or by minorities. It cannot be established by politicians, and capitalism cannot be reformed into Socialism.

What is required is a Socialist Revolution. Conscious political action by a Socialist majority. A world socialist movement. A socialist majority understanding and agreeing with the urgent necessity to abolish capitalism politically and replace it with Socialism.

The SPGB does not just want money, although buying Socialist literature is far more sensible than giving it to charity. It does not want leaders. It does not want people who want to be led. The SPGB wants active Socialists, capable of thinking and acting for themselves.

This is the only way to a future free from pollution caused by the anti-social interests of a small capitalist minority, supported by their political agents – a small minority capitalist class, whose drive to make a profit has left a world vulnerable, its inhabitants exploited, and the future bleak and inhospitable.

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Carnage, Massacres and the State

Capitalism has a long record of massacres and indiscriminate slaughter. The terrorist bombs on July 7th, in London Tube trains and a crowded bus, brought widespread shock and horror. Yet almost daily, in Iraq, suicide bombers bring about scores of deaths, and the number of ‘civilian’ deaths directly attributable to the invasion and occupation has reached well over 20,000, according to the meticulous research done by the Iraq Body Count group.

A hundred years ago, on January 24 1905, a peaceful demonstration of workers in St Petersburg was attacked by the armed forces of the Russian state. A report in THE TIMES, a paper which was not normally known to be sympathetic to “the working men of St Petersburg”, described the scene in the Russian capital, quoting an eye-witness account by a horrified French newspaperman:

The soldiers of the Preobrazhensky Regiment, without any summons to disperse, as if playing at bloodshed (comme a un jeu de massacre) shoot down the unfortunate people crowded into this space. Several hundred fall. There are more than 150 killed. They are almost all children, women, and young people. It is terrible. Blood flows on all sides...

At 5 o’clock the crowd is driven back, cut down, and repelled on all sides. The people, terror-stricken, fly in every direction. Scared women and children slip, fall, and rise to their feet, only to fall again further on. At this moment a sharp word of command is heard and the victims fall en masse. The repression is terrible. There had been no disturbance to speak of. The whole crowd is unarmed and had not uttered a single threat...

I will end my narrative. I am broken-hearted at the unheard-of spectacle of massacre on such a scale. As I write discharges of musketry are heard. The workmen at Vassili Ostroff are being shot down en masse.

THE TIMES, 24 January 1905 [reprinted in 1955]

Of course, this was hardly “*an unheard of spectacle of massacre on such a scale*”. Surely a French reporter should have known of the slaughter on the streets of Paris as the “forces of law and order” massacred the Paris Communards – a slaughter far worse than this minor skirmish in St Petersburg, a bloodbath which did not discriminate between those who had manned the barricades and those who were merely bystanders. Or had even the memory and infamous history of this massacre been buried, along with its unfortunate victims (some of them buried alive), and so been lost to future generations?

A century after that first ‘Russian Revolution’ in 1905, capitalism remains as carnal as ever. Less than 10 years later, the workers of Europe were driven into the trenches and forced to slaughter each other. Bloodshed then was on a more than wholesale scale, as compared with the mere retail terrorism of the London bombs and the Iraqi suicide bombers.

Socialists reject the methods of terrorism. These are clearly counter-productive since they give the ruling politicians an excuse to justify further repression. Hardly had the July 7th bombs in London gone off, while the victims were still being treated in hospitals, and already the Home Secretary was girding his loins to take charge of the situation. Having earlier got rid of the old Habeas Corpus law requiring the police to bring charges within a day or two of arresting someone, the Blair government had progressed to the point that, under their still new anti-terrorism laws, the police could hold a suspect for up to 14 days. This had only recently come into law and so was still relatively untested.

Now, with these new outrages, Blair and Clarke moved fast: claiming to be acting on the advice of the police, they now demanded to have the power for suspects to be held “for questioning” for up to 3 months. In a period that long, a ‘suspect’ may well be got to confess to whatever is required.

More is still to come: possibly a ban on all “extremist” organisations and publications, possibly a new law of “indirect incitement”, along with widespread phone-tapping, and intrusion into emails and correspondence. That - and the minor matter of the police apparently operating a “shoot to kill” policy for several years, never even discussed in Parliament, and only made known when, in their enthusiasm, plain clothes policemen chased and shot an unfortunate Brazilian eight times, in front of a number of horrified Tube train travellers.

Terrorism is not at all something unheard of in capitalism. Even suicide bombers have been around for quite a while: in the past the PLO used aircraft hijacking as a tactic, with the threat of a suicide bomber on board a plane holding the passengers and crew hostage. But somehow the British government and British media imagined that this sort of thing only happened in other countries - in Israel-Palestine or Chechnya, for instance. But never here, they said. Just as the USA had supposed itself exempt from the madness of terrorism, so too did the British government and its supporters.

Ballot or Bullet?

Near the end of the 19th century, Plekhanov, a Russian Marxist, wrote a little book, ANARCHISM AND SOCIALISM. This was translated into English by Eleanor Marx Aveling in 1895, and published in the USA by Kerr and Co in 1907. At the time, there were a number of terrorist “outrages” being perpetrated on both sides of the Atlantic by anarchists who believed in “the propaganda of the deed”.

Plekhanov was scathing in his contempt for the Anarchists and their “propaganda of the deed”:

To attain [his] end, [the Anarchist] arms himself with a saucepan full of explosive materials and throws it amongst the public in a theatre or a cafe...

It goes without saying that the bourgeois governments, whilst inveighing against the authors of these attempts, cannot but congratulate themselves upon these tactics. “Society is in danger!”... And the police “consuls” become active, and public opinion applauds all the reactionary measures resorted to by ministers in order to “save society”...

The work of the Terrorists in uniform would be much more difficult if the Anarchists were not so eager to help in it.... An Anarchist is a man who – when he is not a police agent - is fated always and everywhere to attain the opposite of that which he attempts to achieve (pp 135-137).

Plekhanov argued emphatically that:

Every class-struggle is a political struggle. Whosoever repudiates the political struggle by this very act, gives up all part and lot in the class-struggle (pp 62-63).

But today there are still those who count themselves ‘Socialists/Communists’, yet who utterly reject the political

class struggle, and have nothing but contempt for the use of the ballot. The influence of those 19th-century anarchists is still to be seen in their work.

The International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party, in their journal *REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES* (nos. 34-35), took issue with the “*Parliamentary Path to Socialism*”. According to them the revolution they envisage is one in which the workers “*would have no need for parliament and [would] express their political will through their own working class organs, namely the workers councils*”. They argue that workers becoming conscious of the need to overthrow capitalism is “*a process which... can only happen on a significant scale in a practical movement, namely a process of revolution*”.

Consider these two points of theirs:

1. Apparently the revolutionary working class will develop a clear understanding of the need to overthrow capitalism, so it is meaningful to talk of the workers’ “*political will*”. But these class-conscious workers, instead of organising politically to gain control over the armed forces, the police and other coercive aspects of the state, are apparently content simply to set up committees.

Workers’ councils are in fact just that: committees. While committees and councils are sensible ways of organising anything, they do not necessarily work to *change* anything. In fact, almost by definition they work within the constraints of the existing set-up.

2. Another question: if workers can only get an understanding of the need to overthrow capitalism in “*a process of revolution*”, where does that “*process of revolution*” come from? How does it come about? Do significant numbers of workers just wake up one fine day and say let’s have a revolution, and only afterwards try to figure out why they are having a “*process of revolution*”?

Surely that is absolute nonsense. Revolutions only happen because they are willed: as Marx argued. They happen because they are in the class interest of those who make the revolution, and so have become conscious of the need to overthrow the dominant class. Before there can be a revolutionary change in society, there has to be a revolutionary class, one which is conscious of the need to bring about this historic change.

The IBRP and their like are unable to explain where this “*process of revolution*” would come from. Moreover, since they utterly reject the use of the ballot to gain control of Parliament and similar governing institutions in other countries, any revolution launched along the suicidal lines advocated by the IBRP and similar organisations would be wide open to being crushed by the forces of the state. These forces, after all, are in fact financed and controlled by, and take their orders from, governments.

To disregard this awkward fact is to urge workers to adopt a suicidal strategy. It would be to ignore the lessons of history – from the Peterloo massacre, the Paris Commune, the 1905 St Petersburg massacre, the crushing of the Kronstadt revolt, and very many other such bloodstained episodes. The armed forces and police, in Britain, the USA, and most other countries, have been used, again and again, to crush strikes and suppress demonstrations.

As long as the forces of the state are not under the control of the working class, they would continue to be used to defend the interests of the capitalist class. That is why “*every class struggle is a political struggle*” (COMMUNIST MANIFESTO). Only anarchists and utopians would disregard the class role of the state.

“Electoral Cretinism”?

There was another recent attack on those who insist on the need for *political* organisation to achieve Socialism: this was in a French journal, *LE PROLETAIRE* (no. 476, April-May 2005), the “*organ of the international communist party*”. This fraction is yet another one devoted to the “*line of Marx and Lenin*”, opposing Stalinism, and also “*in opposition to personal and electoral politics*”. In short, much the same as the IBRP and others in Britain.

It is, of course, a huge mistake for them to think one can bracket together Marx and Lenin. To start with, Marx relied

on the class struggle, class-consciousness and the self-organisation of the working class. But Lenin argued that the working class needed to be led by a ‘vanguard party’ of the intelligentsia, an elite “General Staff” who would decide the strategy to be followed, with the ‘masses’ seen merely as those “other ranks” who would carry out the instructions of the leadership (see WHAT IS TO BE DONE? ,1901).

With their opposition to all electoral politics, in connection with the EU referendum, LE PROLETAIRE has nothing but the most lofty, scathing contempt for what it refers to as “*electoral cretinism*”:

Electoral illusions put out by all taking part in the referendum campaign disarm the workers... by making them believe in the mirage of a painless way of blocking the capitalists, instead of warning them [the workers] to prepare themselves for desperate struggles: even and especially if those people claim to be ‘workers’, ‘communists’ and ‘revolutionaries’ - such people are working objectively for the bourgeoisie.

Again, this raises the question of just how exactly workers are supposed to oppose the capitalists, and win, while the capitalist class still hold that trump card, their control of the armed forces etc, with which they would crush the workers, as they have done, ruthlessly, so many times before. These Leninist gurus have nothing to offer of any use to the working class. The direct action strategy they suggest would be suicidal and futile, utopian in the extreme.

Socialists insist on the need for a Socialist political party, organised to take control of the entire machinery of government, as a realistic, commonsense measure to ensure that the armed forces of the state could not be used to defend capitalism and the interests of the capitalist class. Without an effective, class-conscious, democratic, political organisation *for Socialism and nothing but Socialism*, the working class will remain stuck with capitalism.

NEW PAMPHLETS

Following the Party’s centenary in 2004, we have published a new pamphlet, A CENTURY OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE. Subtitled CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS, POLITICS AND PRINCIPLE, the text is based on the lectures given at our 2004 Summer School, held almost exactly 100 years on from the Inaugural Meeting in June 1904 at which The SPGB was founded. At that first meeting, The SPGB’s Object and Declaration of Principles were agreed on, and in this latest pamphlet, along with many historic issues faced by the Party in the last 100 years, we discuss the importance of sound, democratic Socialist organisation, of the Party’s principled opposition to reformism, nationalism and capitalist wars, and a refusal to take sides on any issues used to divide the working class.

Another 2005 publication is a new updated edition of NEW LABOUR– A PARTY OF CAPITALISM. The Blair government seems determined to do all it can to prove our predictions right, demonstrating to the best of its ability that it is the “party of business”, not - perish the thought – a party of peace or one which favours the interests of workers, on whose votes it depends. Lots of ammunition here.

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New Labour - Death and Delusion

Mr Blair’s place in history has been the subject of much discussion over the past year or so. As a capitalist (and therefore an anti-working class) politician, he has been built up by the media as an ambivalent figure, to mean whatever the system demands of him. His power base in working-class political ignorance means he is seen as leading while in reality he is merely reacting to situations produced by capitalism, over which he has no control. He qualifies as a world statesman: his part in killing 100,000 people (mostly women and children) in Iraq assures him of that.

Afghanistan is another poor country where his blood-spilling will be remembered. One family in eight has an amputee, and the UN say it will take seven years to clear the remaining land-mines. “*Britain is among the ten countries that produce them [landmines]*” (BBCI, 8 June 2005). Geoff Hoon, then Blair’s war minister, defended the use of cluster-bombs in Afghanistan. It is not possible for capitalist politicians to extricate themselves from the inhuman machinations of capitalism.

As Socialists, we do not differentiate between cluster-bombs and depleted uranium. We condemn the entire edifice of militarism and weapons, including the nuclear variety made possible in the UK by the post-war Labour government.

Trident's Continued Threat

In the late 1980s, when Labour still faced ten more years in 'opposition', a pamphlet, BRIEFING TO WIN, was published by Trades Unionists for Labour. It was sponsored by 36 well-known trade unions, including the NUR, ASLEF, TGWU, NUPE, SOGAT and USDAW. It is a disgraceful document that fosters just about every anti-working class delusion associated with the Labour Party.

Here are some examples:

The use of nuclear weapons is not feasible in our close and crowded continent. Any significant exchange of nuclear weapons would exterminate both defender and aggressor...

Labour will cancel Trident and decommission Polaris – and build up stronger forces... without Trident we could afford to build the equivalent of 90 frigates, 500 fighter aircraft or 10,000 armoured vehicles (pp 26-27).

There is no condemnation of capitalism for bringing the world to the brink of extermination, just a preference for "conventional" weapons that would safeguard jobs in the killing industries. The fact is that the Labour government has no intention to "*cancel Trident*".

Labour's 2005 election manifesto states:

With the withdrawal of the last RAF WE177 bombs... Trident is our only nuclear weapon. We need to ensure that it can remain an effective deterrent for up to 30 years. That would take us to the year 2028.

Robert Fox, from whose article in New Statesman (13 June 2005) this information comes, goes on to say: "*already Aldermaston has been recruiting scientists to design warheads*". By contrast, it was reported (7 June 2005) that 14 people were arrested at the Faslane Trident submarine base while taking part in an anti-nuclear protest.

So, under the New Labour government, we still have the threat of extermination but to protest against it can be risky. There has been no "*retraction of support*" from those 36 unions that sponsored Labour's return.

Dreams and Disillusionment

In BRIEFING TO WIN, those unions condemn the Tory economic record: "... *yet the richest 5% in Britain have had a cut in their annual tax bill of £3.6 billion under the Tories*" (p29). They should study the Sunday Times Rich List 2005 "*The top 10 alone in this year's list are worth £52,55 billion - £10 billion more than the top 200 put together 10 years ago*" (p6). Philip Beresford, who compiles this Rich List, also says (p6): "*The wealth explosion is reflected in the record number of billionaires on the list. At 40, it is 10 higher than last year. In 1997 there were just 16.*"

No wonder the Tories are desperate to reclaim their place as the number one party of capitalism. This wealth explosion reflects the extent of the exploitation of wage-labour. It comes from the surplus-value workers produce above the amount of their wages as a class. Even in the domain of trade union affairs, workers naively refuse to learn from the history of Labour government strike breaking and believe Labour can run capitalism for the workers.

In BRIEFING TO WIN (p16), the writers claimed: "*Labour will repeal all employment laws since 1979 and replace them with laws to strengthen the rights of people at work.*" They neglected to say when! The next page asserted that Labour will "*encourage a shorter, more flexible working week with shorter working days.*"

It would be interesting to hear the writers' comments on the recent battle to let British workers continue to work 48 hours per week and longer. In May this year, the EU urged Britain to scrap its opt-out of the 48-hour week but Blair's 'Labour' government was for longer hours.

Housing and Poverty

In BRIEFING TO WIN, under the heading, *Home truths – the Tory record on housing since 1976*, we are told:

The number of homeless families had doubled since 1978... Labour believes everyone should have a decent, safe home at a price they can afford (pp 8-9).

Well, the Blairs can afford a house priced at £3.6 million, but a TELETTEXT report (21 May 2005) said: “*Nurses and firemen are priced out of the property market and the problem is now UK wide.*” Moreover, “*in England alone homelessness has topped 100,000, up by 135% since 1997*” (TELETTEXT, 13 December 2004). That is a further 135% on top of the figure they say doubled between 1978 and 1988 under the Tories.

Peter Mandelson, whom Blair appointed to a nice little earner in Europe, has said New Labour is “*intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich*” (NEW STATESMAN, 7 March 2005). In one year Britain’s then wealthiest man, Roman Abramovich, made £564 million while the charity CRISIS report in 2004 refers to homeless beggars in London’s West End being arrested by police to have finger-prints and DNA samples taken.

Socialists have always argued that housing problems are an aspect of poverty. Workers have these problems, capitalists do not. The people who get “*filthy rich*” are the capitalist class, those who own society’s means of production. The time is long overdue when trade unions (and the working class generally) should stop showing a preference for who runs capitalism on the backs of their members and started to think about Socialism, which was nowhere mentioned in BRIEFING TO WIN.

Yet More Poverty

Trades Unionists for Labour show no awareness that capitalism necessarily engenders poverty. They tell us that: “*Too many British people live in poverty. Labour will modernise the welfare state, giving certain groups top priority*” (p 23). How many people should live in poverty, they do not say: “*too many*” can mean anything, and their horizons go no further than Britain. They refer to pensioners losing out because of the break with Earnings Related Pensions and say that Labour will restore this scheme. They see child benefit as the best way to help millions of children in poverty. They also say: “*People with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed, yet their living costs are often higher. Labour will phase in a new disability income scheme, starting immediately*” (p 23). They completely fail to see that applying more reforms to try to salvage the failure of past reforms (Labour and Tory) is utterly futile.

The charity, Children in Need, was 25 years old in 2004. Barnardo’s say 48% of inner-London children are in poverty. In the UK, 3.8 million children live in homes below the poverty income of £224 per week (TELETTEXT, 12 November 2003). UNICEF reported (March 1 2005) that 15.4 per cent of UK children live in poverty. Worldwide, every three seconds, a child dies from extreme deprivation, nearly 30,000 a day. The UK – under a Labour government – has the highest proportion of excess winter deaths in the EU. According to Help the Aged, “*in the year 2002/3, in England and Wales 21,800 old people died as a direct result of the cold*” (TELETTEXT, 27 November 2003). The Rowntree Foundation say: “*The disabled live in extreme poverty well below the poverty line*” (TELETTEXT, 20 October 2004).

The class cleavage is seen starkly by some 7 million workers in fear of penury in retirement worrying about pensions while RADIO 4 on 12 May 2003 told us the total pensions pot for Britain’s top 100 Executive Directors could be as much as £2 billion (£20,000,000 each).

On 1 July 2005, the TUC argued for pensions at 65. The spokesman said: “*The target of getting 80% of working age people into jobs, together with increased prosperity, could support a growing elderly population*” (TELETTEXT). Three days before they were “urging the government to call a special summit to help UK industry tackle the jobs threat by the expanding Chinese economy” (TELETTEXT, 28 June 2005).

The TUC figure for getting people of working age into jobs implies at least 20% unemployment, so the figure of 1.4

million unemployed is false. In fact there are 2.7 million claiming Incapacity Benefit, and David Blunkett, Minister of Work and Pensions, wants to get 1 million of them back to work under threat of benefit cuts. One in five men in Glasgow are on sick incapacity. Blunkett, who gets £133,997 per year plus £11,166 per month expenses (BBC CEEFAX, 15 May 2005), tells people on the minimum wage of £4.85 an hour to save for a pension of £9,331 a year. The National Association of Pensions Funds says: “*A basic £105 weekly pension is to be implemented within six years*” (CEEFAX, 13 December 2004).

Educating Wage-Slaves

Under a government seeking to outlaw criticism of religion and with a Catholic Minister of Education, the four Rs - reading, writing, arithmetic and religion - have taken on a new significance. During this year's election campaign, Ruth Kelly said she was aware of many school-leavers lacking skills in English or Maths. Her plan was to attack “*the dropout culture we have now*” (CEEFAX, 11 April 2005). She neglected to add, after eight years of Labour government. Perhaps, so long as they do not leave school without praying “*skills*”, all is not lost for capitalism?

At the other end of the capitalist education scale, Barclays Research in May 2004 showed that student debt had jumped 10% in 2003. The average debt on leaving higher education was £12,069.

Manufacturing Declines

The Trades Unionists for Labour booklet, under the heading BRITAIN ISN'T WORKING, says of the Tory years: “*Jobs in manufacturing are down by 2,000,000*” and they affirm that:

Labour will invest in industry – to rebuild a modern manufacturing base And, under Labour, the long term unemployed will get their fair share of new jobs (p 5).

The reality for workers facing an extended work-life to get a pension does not look so encouraging. Nor does the unions' acceptance that long-term unemployment will continue.

The Confederation of British Industry said in January 2005:

Manufacturing industry is in long-term decline. 146,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in three months to November 2001.

The TUC, in the lead up to the May 2005 election, “*urged a Labour government to help stem job losses in manufacturing firms by reviewing the help it gives companies*” (TELETEXT, 8 February 2005). Under the Labour government, manufacturing jobs have fallen by a million since 1997 - this was reported just as 22,000 more jobs were lost, bringing manufacturing to its lowest level since records began in 1978 (Office for National Statistics, TELETEXT, 16 March 2005). So, instead of the Labour government saving manufacturing, it is in a worse state than when 2,000,000 jobs were lost under the Tories.

In Blair's “*opportunity Britain*”, Corus Steel at Teeside was still cutting jobs as its Chief Executive got a 19 per cent rise last year to £1.43 million.

There was no government life-line for MG Rover after 100 years making cars. 5,500 jobs plus 15,000 in supply firms at stake but administrators said MG Rover and its Powertrain engine business were losing between £20-25 million a month. Capitalism at work! The TGWU hoped the Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation would save the firm from collapse, but it did not happen.

Concerning long-term unemployment, after the pit closures in the 1980s, 90,000 ex-miners are still jobless, and mining unemployment is masked by a high level of ill health. The Welbeck colliery, one of very few left, was only reprieved from closure when 520 miners agreed to work longer}. Pit machinery is to operate 40% more (report, March 2005, by Sheffield Hallam University).

The reality of how capitalism plays with the lives of the working class does not accord too well with Trade Union delusions!

Health Chaos

With people in this country forming long queues to get NHS dental treatment, dentists as well as nurses and doctors, are being recruited from poor countries. The BMA chairman, James Johnson, has said the “*rape*” of the world’s poorest countries’ health staff must stop: the “*obscene exploitation*” of the third world is “*not live aid, it’s reverse aid*” (TELETEXT, 27 June 2005).

During the general election, the Jonathan Dimbleby TV programme noted the fact that, after nearly 60 years, the Health Service was the main election issue as the government’s policy of ‘targeting’ put patients at risk.

Blair’s health service policy is to have 250,000 operations done in the private sector to cut NHS waiting time to 18 weeks (Teletext 8 March 2005). In the NHS 67,000 operations were cancelled in 2004 – 10,000 more than five years ago. A pensioner had a heart operation cancelled seven times at Warrington Hospital.

With just under 830,000 on waiting lists in March, the figure was up by 6,000 on the previous month (BBCI, 3 June 2005).

The Royal College of Surgeons says there will be a 2,700 short-fall of surgeons by 2010.

With nurses leaving the profession to be able to get on the housing ladder, 30,000 nurses left the UK to work in the US in 2003 (TELETEXT, 1 November 2003).

In an effort to reduce pressure on Accident and Emergency clinics, 999 calls will no longer guarantee an ambulance (CEEFAQ, 30 June 2005).

What effect this brainwave will have on injured people remains to be seen, but cost is the key factor: as in every aspect of health under capitalism, it determines the standard of service. When a Watchdog report attacked government stewardship, Health Secretary, Patricia Hewitt, said: “*the cash crisis should not hit patients at the 100 NHS trust bodies in deficit*” (TELETEXT, 24 June 2005). No doubt the much publicised issue of dirty hospitals has a cost factor involved. What did not get much publicity was Blair’s refusal to fund a drug-based remedy for multiple sclerosis (TELETEXT, 13 June 2005).

The reason why the various health and welfare reforms of nearly 60 years ago have not solved the problems of health and welfare but continue to produce misery and the demand for yet more reforms is because it is not possible to operate outside of capitalist economics while that system remains. In a class society of rich and poor with profit-motivated production, every aspect of society is subject to its *modus operandi*.

Surveillance Society - the Tyranny Tightens

Under Labour’s ever-expanding surveillance society, the accused in ‘anti-terrorism’ cases will not know the case against them, and may be held indefinitely with no access to a phone, the Internet or legal representation. The main Parliamentary ‘opposition’ parties accept this, with the Liberal Democrats wanting a judge to ratify a politician’s decision to arrest. The 800-years old double jeopardy principle, meaning that a person cannot be tried more than once for the same offence, ended on the 4 April 2005. England and Wales have 139 prisons and 75,550 prisoners (as of April 2005, Home Office figures). The Religious Hatred Bill carries a 7-year jail term. How scientific analysis of and opposition to all religion can be expressed, if some moron claims it might make people hate him, is an open question. The Labour Government’s Control Order law, which allows for electronic tagging and also for house arrest, contravenes human rights, claims the European Commission for Human Rights.

If Hitler or Stalin had somehow been able to develop technology that would have enabled them to use satellites circling the earth, to eavesdrop on millions of telephone conversations and to monitor every journey of every motor

vehicle and also to know the movements of people by tracking them with electronic tagging, the British mass-press would have screamed “*Fascist Outrage.*” If these dictators could have produced identity cards full of personal details with figure-prints and iris scans, “*Tyranny Tightens the Screw*” might have been a head-line.

In today’s Britain, after two world wars where ‘freedom and democracy’ was falsely declared to be the issue, all of this and much more is Labour government policy. Those people given to protest and demonstration can no longer do so within half-a-mile of Parliament. The blindness and hypocrisy of capitalism was seen in the mass coverage given to the government’s banning of replica guns. Nobody wanted to notice that if official society (capitalism) was not bristling with legal, real weapons, there would be nothing to replicate.

The Case For Socialism

Because Socialism means the complete abolition of capitalism there will be a total break with the political power-structures of one class controlling another. With common ownership, all people will stand in the same equal relation to each other and to the world, its resources, its industry, and its knowledge. With classes gone and the exploitation of man by man ended, mankind will rise to unimaginable heights of co-operation and fulfilment.

Socialism will restore humanity to mankind, rendered barbaric and alien through the millennia of class society, chattel slavery, feudalism and, the most dehumanising of all, modern industrial capitalism. Socialism will be a new age of dignity and human mutuality.

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Food for Thought at Gate Gourmet

During the summer, at the height of the holiday season, British Airways workers at Heathrow went on strike. Although BA was not directly involved, it had contracted out many of its services to save money and increase profits. Supplying what passes for food to BA’s aeroplanes is just one service among many which have been snapped up by wealthy capitalists looking for quick profits. And profits are what drives Gate Gourmet. Gate Gourmet, the US multinational, has a virtual monopoly on supplying airline food in the US and Europe. Like all employers it wants to reduce costs and make as much money from its workers as possible. One cost is its wages and salaries bill. The company wanted workers to accept lower starting salaries and some redundancies, and those who remained to work harder. This is par for the course in capitalist concerns and is mimicked in the State sector from the NHS to Local authorities.

The motive of capitalist production is profit. The way capitalists try to increase profit is to increase the unpaid element of the working day in relation to the paid working day, to increase the surplus product in relation to the product necessary for the workers’ means of subsistence. Capitalists, as Marx showed, have to try to increase what he called the rate of surplus value. To do this, capitalists have several techniques at their disposal.

The first is speeding up the work through fixing the workforce in a conveyor belt system where each operation is dictated by the process of production. At a paint factory, for example, workers fill the pots with paint as they pass through a grinder. If the paint passes through the grinder quicker than before and the same worker fill an extra dozen of pots within the same time his productivity has increased. The same applies to car manufacture and other assembly-line production.

Another technique is to improve working conditions, to use profit-sharing, company pensions, and other “*perks*” to retain a workforce or to give them the incentive to work harder. Psychologists noted that improving the lighting of an office increased productivity. Industrial psychologists have introduced into companies other strategies to give the impression that workers have a “*stake*” in the organisation and induce them to work harder. The management theory of “*empowerment*” is a more recent example. In other words, the capitalist may increase the unpaid labour either by lengthening the working day – many workers now work through their lunch period, – or by increasing the intensity of work by making workers work harder for the same pay. Both methods increase the rate of exploitation by

generating more surplus value. Another technique is to drive wages down for the same amount of work or for additional work. If a team of five workers were told two were to be sacked while the remaining three not only worked for less pay but did the work once done by five workers this increases the profit going to the capitalist. “*Restructuring*”, as it is called.

The technique adopted by the employers at Gate Gourmet was a variation on the latter technique of increasing profits. They found a pool of six hundred workers who would do the work *en masse* at less than the wages of the current workforce, and also under worse conditions. The company engineered a strike so that the current workforce could be sacked, be paid no redundancy money, and then the company could hire the cheaper pool of labour. The trick did not quite work since other workers supported the workers at Gate Gourmet.

So what of the capitalist who owns Gate Gourmet? Step forward, David Bonderman, whose business empire owns the company. He has an estimated fortune of \$6bn. The investment company he founded in 1993, Texas Pacific, has assets of about \$15bn. Bonderman is also the chairman of the cheap airline, Ryanair: like other cheap airlines, this would stand to profit from BA losing passengers, especially at a time when, with a loss of passengers flying to London after the July terrorist bombs, in addition to higher costs due to the ever-rising price of oil, BA has been increasingly in difficulties.

For Mr Bonderman’s 60th birthday he spent a cool \$10 million at the Bellagio, one of Las Vegas’s most opulent casinos, where the comedian Robin Williams gave him a stand-up routine over dinner. Their guests were treated to a private concert by the Rolling Stones. This has its irony. In 1968 the Rolling Stones sang “*Street Fighting Man*” celebrating “*the sound of marching, charging feet*” around Grosvenor Square as the capitalist Left battled it out with the police. Mick Jagger incredibly sang at the time “*But what can a poor boy do except to sing for a rock ’n roll band*”. When Sir Mick sang to David Bonderman, it was not a “poor boy” who was singing for his supper, and it was certainly not a poor man who was listening through a haze of smouldering birthday candles.

“*But what can a poor boy do*”? Workers at Heathrow Airport thought that striking would help but they were summarily sacked. Even if they get their jobs back, they will remain poor and exploited. Nor will joining a rock ’n roll band help. Sir Mick is an exception to the rule. Most rock musicians, if they survive their twenties, remain poor, bodily crippled and mentally exhausted.

Marx said workers should look at capitalism with a sober disposition. His conclusion was that because capitalism can never be made to work in the interest of the working class they should consciously and politically abolish it. This meant becoming Socialists.

As a socialist you will not become a “*street fighting man*” but instead someone who thinks for themselves, someone who concludes that a Socialist revolution is the only solution to class exploitation. Common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society will put an end to parasites like David Bonderman. A growing Socialist movement should have Bonderman choking on his next piece of birthday cake.

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Hunger and THE ECONOMIST

It is not often that THE ECONOMIST addresses capitalism’s systemic failures, so a feature on “*Nutrition*” (31 July 2004) was something of a surprise. True, natural disasters like droughts, floods and crop failures do not by themselves cause widespread, persistent hunger. But the solution to the problem of persistent malnutrition is not simply a matter of “*quick, cheap, fixes*”, such as food supplements and “*tasty new recipes*”.

These do not address the root cause of the problem, which was actually stated in the ECONOMIST article: “*only the poor are hungry*”. In which case, the editorial’s suggestion of giving “*hungry people formal title to the land they work*” would not be the solution for most. One cannot eat a legal document. Also, the burden of debt and the repayment of loans would mean that this land would soon end up owned by the rich, leaving the hungry poor still

poor and consequently still hungry.

ECONOMIST article claimed that “*rich, well-educated countries never go hungry*”. Yet in Britain, after the hungry years of the Depression, the Government had to give Army recruits a special diet “*to make them fit and strong*”, as was noted in the SUNDAY EXPRESS (7 February. 1937).

“*Why weren’t they fit and strong before?*”

“*Because they didn’t have enough to eat when they were children.*”...

“*If they had been given a special diet when they were children would they be fit and strong now?*”

“*Yes, and half as big again. ...[and] all those rejected as unfit would be fit.*”

“*Well, if they fed all the children now they would have plenty of soldiers when they grow up, wouldn’t they?*”

“*Yes.*”

“*Well, why don’t they do it?*”

“*Because that would be waste of money.*”

[quoted in the SOCIALIST STANDARD, March 1937]

Face it, the capitalist system is the cause of the problem. Like other goods, food is produced as a commodity. That being the case, the key question is not what do people need but what can they *afford* to buy. Market demand is defined as need - plus ability to pay. Those who can’t pay go hungry.

This system works well enough for the rich but has obviously undesirable consequences – hunger and chronic malnutrition have poverty as their cause, and millions of wrecked and stunted lives as their consequence. That is just one aspect of the systemic wastefulness of world capitalism, with or without assorted “*quick, cheap fixes*”.

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Marx's Theories in the Modern World

The main theories of Karl Marx are known as The Materialist Conception of History, The Labour Theory of Value and The Political History of the Class Struggle, and they form the theoretical basis of The SPGB. Our adherence to these theories is reflected in our DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, and they have been the subject of articles and lectures since the formation of the party in 1904 to the present day. The party has also produced pamphlets dealing with the MCH and Marxian economics, and many other issues including religion and war. In fact, there is hardly anything written or spoken by The SPGB without the application of Marx’s theories.

It is important to understand that these theories are linked together, and therefore should not be seen as separate and unrelated. They are about changing society, e.g. why and how feudalism gave way to capitalism, and in turn why capitalism must give way to Socialism. They deal with social relations of production and the law of value as the expression of capitalist *relations of production*. Marx did not see Socialism as an ideal society which he opposed to capitalism. He saw it as the outcome of contradictions which have developed within capitalism. He saw that capitalism had developed the productive forces to a stage where they come into conflict with the relations of production. He saw that the working class, who produced and worked those productive forces, were an exploited class and therefore were potentially a revolutionary class, their class interest being in the establishment of a society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production.

Although there is a certain amount of interest in Marx’s theories, unfortunately there is also a great deal of ignorance, misrepresentation and distortion. Marx is rarely read, with too much reliance on the interpretations of other writers. For example, in Marx on Economics, published by Penguin and edited by Robert Freedman, Freedman states: “*Most students of Marxian economics rarely read the master, but are content to let his critics speak for him*”. It was the economist, the late Maynard Keynes, who described Marx’s principal work, CAPITAL, as an “*obsolete text book*”, without interest or application for the modern world. The most persistent criticism of Marx is that his theories are out of date.

Of course, we know that there have been great changes since the 1860s when Marx wrote Capital. Capitalism is now

a world-wide system, and the working class generally have a higher standard of living. The workers, with the aid of more sophisticated technology which they have produced, have increased their productivity in all spheres of production, and through trade unions have obtained some of this increase. The composition of the working class has also changed: there are now many more white-collar workers, relative to manual workers

There have also been great technical changes since Marx's day with the development of aircraft, motorcars, TV, refrigeration, central heating, computers, etc. But the fact is that Marx was well aware that capitalism was changing and would continue to develop its productive forces. Marx saw capitalism as a dynamic system – not a static one.

Even with all these changes, in essentials capitalism remains the same. In any case, Marx was concerned with the underlying structure of capitalism. It is the underlying structure which reveals the class struggle between workers and capitalists, and how the working class are exploited. When the working class understand the Labour Theory of Value, they will understand the nature of their exploitation, and therefore their class interest in abolishing capitalism and establishing Socialism.

It is understandable then that capitalists and their representatives should be afraid of Marx and seek to misrepresent his theories. After all, these theories are a threat to their system.

As Marx said in the preface to Volume I of CAPITAL

In the domain of Political Economy, free scientific enquiry meets not merely the same enemies as in all other domains. The peculiar nature of the material it deals with, summons as foes into the field of battle the most violent, mean and malignant passions of the human breast, the Furies of private interest. The English Established Church, e.g., will more readily pardon an attack on 38 of its 39 articles than 1/39th of its income.

In the introduction to Freedman's book, MARX ON ECONOMICS, Harry Schwartz wrote: "Marx and Engels had little to say about the kind of society that would follow capitalism, but most of what they did say has been outrun by the march of events".

Schwartz pointed out that, in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, Marx and Engels listed ten measures which the victorious proletariat would take shortly after seizing power. Schwartz continued:

... at least half of these measures – among them free universal education for children, heavy progressive income tax, and gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country – are today regarded as commonplace in western capitalist countries.

That passage from the Manifesto is often quoted by Marx's critics, but what they all fail to point out is that, in his preface to the 1888 English edition of the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, Engels quoted from an earlier Preface (to the German edition of 1872), jointly written by himself and Marx:

... no special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures at the end of section II. That passage would, in many respects, be very differently worded to-day.

Schwartz also misrepresented Marx and Engels on depressions:

Marx and Engels's writing stresses the view that depressions arise because the exploited masses are simply unable to buy all the output of rising production made possible by the constant accumulation of capital.

Of course, Marx and Engels never held such a silly view. How would it be possible for workers to buy all the output? Workers can only buy with their wages, which can only buy a part of the 'output'. If they were to buy all of the output, they would have to be in possession of the capital and the profit of the capitalist, as well as their wages.

Marx said that crises and the depressions which follow are caused by the disproportion of production in the different spheres of production which inevitably take place from time to time. Commodity production is not subject to rational control; basically commodity production is an anarchic form of production.

The information that most people acquire about Marx's ideas is often second-hand - rarely do they read Marx for themselves. But Marx wrote for the working class, knowing that it was in their interest to understand capitalism, in order for them to become class-conscious and aware of their revolutionary role in establishing Socialism.

The following is a brief outline of some of the main aspects of Marx's main theories. It is important to start with the Materialist Conception of History as Marx considered it to be the guiding thread in his studies. The Materialist Conception of History is a particular way of understanding human society and why it changes, e.g. why feudalism was replaced by capitalism and, in turn, why capitalism must give way to Socialism. It explains political, legal relations, religious ideas, art, etc, from the economic basis of society.

The change from one society to another does not happen automatically but through class struggle, as Marx wrote in The Communist Manifesto: "*The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.*"

The Materialist Conception of History is the exact opposite of the idealist view which explains historical development as the outcome of ideas. For the idealist, the idea has an independent existence which arises spontaneously. On the other hand, Marx, a materialist, said:

It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness.

Preface, 1859, CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY

This is not to deny the effect of ideas - it is to explain them from historically determined conditions.

Marx gives us the first premise of materialism in an essay on Feuerbach:

The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.

THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY, 1845-6

Engels made a very good statement about the Materialist Conception of History in his speech at Marx's graveside:

Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history, he discovered the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology. That mankind must first of all eat and drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, religion, art, etc and that therefore the production of the immediate material means of life, and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch form the foundation upon which the forms of government, the legal conceptions, the art and even the religious ideas of the people concerned have evolved, and in the light of which these things must therefore be explained, instead of vice versa as had hitherto been the case.

Engels is saying here that the way we obtain our means of life – food, clothing, shelter etc - and the social relations in which we produce these things, form the economic basis which shape all our other activities, including the formation of ideas.

We should be aware that, when Engels speaks of the immediate material means of life and degree of economic development, it is not simply physical existence which is in question here. There is more to it, because the degree of economic development gives rise to other social and cultural needs. Marx makes this point clear in THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY:

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and how they produce.

The Materialist Conception of History also teaches us that capitalism has served a useful purpose by developing the productive forces to a degree that makes Socialism not only possible, but necessary if these social forces of production are to be used for the benefit of all members of society. Forces of production and relations of production are central to the Materialist Conception of History - they form the basis for all other aspects of society.

The fact is, although these forces of production could be used to produce wealth in abundance, capitalism can never use them for this purpose, i.e. to meet human needs. It can never produce enough, even when capitalism produces more commodities than can be sold. This apparent over-production is misleading, as Marx wrote:

It is not a fact that too many necessities of life are produced... The reverse is true. Not enough is produced to satisfy the wants of the great mass decently and humanely. CAPITAL, Vol. III, chap. XV (iii)

Marx pointed out how the forces of production have outgrown capitalism.

At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or – what is but a legal expression for the same thing – with the property relations within which they had been at work before.

Preface, CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY

The forces of production are social forces, and the process of production is a social act carried on by the total working class. But the working class are prevented from using the means of production unless the capitalists who own them can make a profit. The capitalist class are therefore a fetter on production, and have become useless parasites.

The Materialist Conception of History explains ideas as arising from the conditions of material existence. In class society, the prevailing ideas are those suited to the ruling class, ideas which keep their system in existence and help it to function.

But as capitalism develops, the contradiction between the productive forces and capitalism's inability to use them for the benefit of the society becomes ever greater. This causes other ideas to develop in opposition to the ideas of the ruling class - capitalism itself gives rise to the ideas of Socialism. Not just ideas but a working class whose class interest is in the establishment of Socialism. As Marx said: "*Capitalism produces its own grave diggers*".

The Materialist Conception of History shows that capitalism has produced all the material means for a socialist society, but to make that a reality requires a class-conscious working class to take the necessary political action.

Marx's Materialist Conception of History leads on to his Labour Theory of Value. A good example of Marx's materialist outlook which informs his Labour Theory of Value is evident in a letter he sent to Dr Kugelmann (11 July 1868):

... even if there were no chapter on value in my book, the analysis of the real relationships which I give would contain the proof and demonstration of the real value relation.

The nonsense about the necessity of proving the concept of value arises from complete ignorance both of the subject dealt with and of the method of science. Every child knows that a country which ceased to work, I will not say for a year, but for a few weeks, would die. Every child knows too that the mass of products corresponding to the different needs require different and quantitatively determined masses of the total labour of society. That this necessity of distributing social labour in definite proportions cannot be done away with by the particular form of social production, but can only change the form it assumes, is self evident. No natural laws can be done away with. What can change, in changing historical circumstances, is the form in which these laws operate. And the form in which this proportional division of labour operates, in a state of society where the interconnection of social labour is manifested in the private exchange of the individual products of labour, is precisely the exchange value of these products. The science consists precisely in working out how the law of value operates. So that if one wanted at the very beginning to "explain" all the phenomena which apparently contradict that law, one would have to give the science before the science.

Labour must necessarily be proportioned to produce the goods which are needed in any form of society. But under capitalist commodity production it expresses itself as the value of the product. The law of value ensures that only socially necessary labour counts: under capitalism, it is the socially necessary labour embodied in products of labour which gives them their value.

As already stated then, the Materialist Conception of History was the guiding thread in Marx's studies and it was the starting point of the Labour Theory of Value. Therefore Marx does not start with an idea of value; he starts from the simplest social form in which the product of labour presents itself, i.e. the commodity. Marx calls it the cell form of capitalism, and this is why Marx's opening statement in CAPITAL is:

The wealth in those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as "an immense accumulation of commodities," its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity.

Marx's Theory of Value is based on the analysis of the commodity. A commodity is a product of labour which is produced to sell, which means it must be useful to someone. The *use-value* of a commodity may be to satisfy a basic need, such as food, clothing or shelter, or it may be purely for pleasure. Such use-value must be produced in all forms of society – it is a nature-imposed necessity.

But commodities are also produced to be exchanged, or sold on the market, therefore they also possess the quality of having *exchange value*. Marx stressed that value was a social relation of production between men, which is expressed as a social relation between things. Value therefore arises from a particular form of society, where the product of labour is exchanged.

But though the appearance is as if value is a natural property of things, yet there is no way of discovering the nature of value by examining the physical properties of commodities.

If we look at two commodities in an exchange relation, two different commodities, say coffee and sugar, where a given quantity of one is equated with a given quantity of the other, this equation tells us that the two different things must be equal to a third, which is neither one or the other. Therefore, as exchange values, they are reducible to this third thing. Exchange values must therefore be capable of being expressed in terms of something common to both, so what is common to both of these very different products?

This is what Marx says it is:

If then we leave out of consideration the use-values of commodities; they have only one common property left, that of being products of labour. But even the product of labour itself has undergone a change in our hands. If we make abstraction from its use-value... [it can no] longer be regarded as the product of labour of the joiner, the mason, the spinner, or any other definite kind of productive labour... there is nothing left but what is common to them all; all are reduced to one and the same sort of labour, human labour in the abstract.

CAPITAL Vol I, chap. I

As values, then, they are products of labour – human labour in the abstract; and the magnitude of value is measured in time – socially necessary labour time. Commodities requiring the same amount of labour time to produce are equal in value. The longer it takes, the greater the value.

Socially necessary labour means that if a certain kind of commodity under its normal conditions of production is produced with the aid of machinery, this would represent the socially necessary labour required for its production. If a producer of the same kind of commodity used a less efficient method taking longer to produce it, the product would not contain more value as the value is determined only by that which is socially necessary. It is not individuals who create value, it is society; and society ensures that only socially necessary labour is expended in the production of commodities.

The Labour Theory of Value explains the nature of exploitation under capitalism. Under social systems based on slavery, the slaves were exploited by producing wealth for their masters who owned them. Under feudalism, the serfs had to work part of the time on the land owned by the 'feudal lords'. Under capitalism, workers are exploited by

producing *surplus value* for the owners of the means of production – the capitalists. Marx discovered the secret of surplus-value, and that it was the driving force of capitalism. Surplus-value, or profit, does not come from buying cheap and selling dear. Surplus-value is still produced even though commodities are sold at their value.

Where does surplus-value come from? When a capitalist invests capital to produce commodities, he buys means of production and labour power. It is a mistake to think that workers are paid for their labour. They are paid for their *labour power*.

Labour power is a commodity but it has a quality no other commodity possesses. It is a value-producing commodity, and it produces a greater value than itself. This means that workers can produce a value which is equivalent to the value of their labour power, i.e. their wages during part of a week, but the rest of the week they produce a surplus-value for the capitalist employers. *Exploitation* consists in workers producing a greater value than what they receive in wages.

The Labour Theory of Value explains wages and profit – the struggle between worker and capitalist. It is a theory of social relations of production under capitalism, not of products and prices.

Bohm-Bawerk, an economist of the Austrian school, put forward a different view of value. He criticised Marx's theory, insisting that it was not socially necessary labour which determined value: it was the utility of the product. But this is to confuse why commodities are exchanged with what constitutes their value.

The Labour Theory of Value teaches us that socially necessary labour time is the common measurable factor which enables exchange to take place, and that underlying the exchange value is a social relation of production. A theory of utility does not start from a social relation, it starts from a relation between the individual and a thing. This is a subjective relation which cannot be measured - it is a relationship which must exist in all forms of society, including Socialism. But exchange value can only exist in a commodity producing society such as capitalism.

Only under capitalism can social labour be expressed as the value of the product. This is the particular form social labour takes under capitalism. If it was the degree of utility which determined value, then a loaf of bread would contain more value than a diamond, but we know that in the commodity-producing society of capitalism this is not the case.

Another criticism of Marx by Bohm-Bawerk is that Marx contradicted himself because, in CAPITAL VOL. I, he said commodities sold at their value. But, in VOL. III, he said commodities do not sell at value but at prices above or below value, at what Marx called their 'prices of production'. Marx did not contradict himself, he assumed, for the purpose of analysis in CAPITAL VOL. I, that commodities exchanged at their value as determined by the socially necessary labour time needed for their production. This was usually the case in the early stage of capitalism before machinery etc developed.

As capitalism developed, the law of value was modified so that, instead of commodities exchanging at their value, they exchanged at prices of production.

It is important to understand that value can only be produced by workers applying their mental and physical energy to produce commodities. But with the development of machinery, etc, the composition of capital is not the same for all spheres of production. The *composition of capital* means the ratio of labour power to the means of production. Some industries employ more workers in relation to means of production than others, therefore they will produce more surplus value than capitals of equal value but which employ less workers, which also means they will have a higher rate of profit.

Capitalism could not function with some spheres of production constantly receiving very high rates of profit and others very low rates. In reality the different spheres of production receive an average rate of profit because commodities sell at prices of production.

The *price of production* means what it costs the capitalist to produce a commodity, plus the average rate of profit. The average rate of profit is arrived at through competition between capitals in the various spheres of production, causing capital to flow from spheres with low rates to spheres with high rates of profit. The result of this movement

is a rise in price and contracting output in one sphere, and expansion and lower prices in another. Marx wrote (CAPITAL, VOL. III, chap. X):

The whole difficulty arises from the fact that commodities are not exchanged simply as commodities, but as products of capitals, which claim equal shares of the total amount of surplus-value, if they are of equal magnitude, or shares proportional to their different magnitudes.

All of this can only be explained on the basis of the Labour Theory of Value, as Marx wrote in THEORIES OF SURPLUS VALUE:

The average rate of profit, and therefore also the production prices, would be purely imaginary and without basis if we did not take the determined value as the foundation. The equalisation of the surplus values in different spheres of production makes no difference to the absolute magnitude of this total surplus value but only alters its distribution among the different spheres of production. The determination of the surplus value itself however only arises from the determination of value by labour time. Without this the average profit is an average of nothing, a mere figment of the imagination. And in that case it might just as well be 1,000%, as 10%.

The Labour Theory of Value reveals that, for as long as capitalism lasts, workers will remain an *exploited class*. The Materialist Conception of History informs us that Socialism will be the outcome of the *class struggle* between workers and capitalists.

Workers are forced to struggle over wages and working conditions within capitalism. But however successful workers are in this economic struggle, it still leaves them as an exploited class.

This leads us to the *political theory of the class struggle*, because Socialism can only be established by class-conscious workers taking political action. As Marx said, the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself.

This means, in the words of our DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES:

That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

The material conditions exist which makes Socialism a practical proposition. It remains for a majority of the working class to take the necessary political democratic action through the ballot and parliament to make Socialism a reality.

So are Marx's theories out of date, as his critics would have us believe? His theories speak for themselves. They are not out of date - on the contrary it is capitalism which is well past its sell-by-date. Proof of this is in the fact that capitalism has produced the capability for a world of abundance, yet is incapable of producing actual abundance. Capitalism has served its useful purpose but it is now a barrier to progress.

Dreaming of an impossible Utopia is futile, but to reject an infinitely far better way of life which is a practical possibility is a self-inflicted punishment.

Marx's Labour Theory of Value shows that capitalism cannot be run in everyone's interest. Capitalism creates problems it cannot solve – problems which devastate people's lives. The future must be Socialism: this is what Marx is about.

The reformers – the capitalists and their agents, politicians, philosophers, economists, journalists, etc – they all give us their interpretations of how they will solve our problems. But they all say capitalism must remain - it is the best of all possible worlds.

Marx's answer in a single sentence:

Poor Marx for the Ruling Class

On 11 September 2001, three civil aircraft were deliberately flown into buildings in Washington and New York. Several thousand people were killed. President Bush and Prime Minister Blair called for a “war against terrorism”. Afghanistan, whose terrorists the US had once financed and armed, was identified as the location of the suspects. Four years later, it was reported (22 August 2005) that over 100 ‘militant suspects’ had been killed in 3 weeks, and more than 50 US personnel had died in the past 6 months.

In Iraq, 100,000 people were killed in the US-led invasion, and since then under the occupation more than 25,000 have been killed. ‘Liberation’ equals blood for oil. President Bush declared: “*We will fight and we will win the war on terrorism*”(28 August 2005).

World capitalism spent £500 billion in 2004 on weapons to enable the rival sections of the capitalist class to continue plundering the earth and exploiting the working class for profits. Nationalism and religion are the smoke-screen behind which the agents of capitalism hide ugly realities. The spectacle of 8000 Jews being dragged kicking and screaming by their own army from occupied Gaza, where they have been with American support for 37 years, is one side of the conflict with Islamic extremism - the invasion of Iraq is the other. The background to Islamic terrorism is nationalism and power struggles.

The ‘war on terrorism’ serves capitalism’s need for a bogeyman to replace Nazism and ‘communism’ as a focus for workers’ hatred, diverting attention away from this predatory system. It is also used to ‘justify’ increasingly fascist legislation, heavily armed police, and the shoot-to-kill policy, which led to the cold-blooded killing of an unarmed Brazilian at a London tube station by the police, and their subsequent lying about it. The indiscriminate killing of 55 people in London (7 July 2005) was condemned as barbaric, which it was. Capitalism sets different standards for the lives of people it destroys. The chain reaction of cause and effect goes on.

It is capitalism that causes terrorism. This insanity will continue until capitalism is replaced by Socialism. Socialism means a system of society based on co-operation, not competition, on common-ownership of the world’s resources; democratically controlled by the whole community; production for USE not profit; a classless society where war would be a thing of the past.

The SPGB re-affirms that the interest of the working class – on whom the untold misery and suffering of conflict and war inevitably falls – lies in abolishing the cause of conflict.

Only world socialism can end wars and conflict by abolishing class relations and nation states.

Capitalism is made up of competing nation states, some dominant like the US, others less strong but no less destructive when pursuing their ‘national’ interests. There is a continual conflict over resources like oil, over strategic points and trade routes. It is only within this framework that terrorism, national conflict, wars and civil wars have to be understood. As long as the world is organised on a capitalist economic basis, its never-ending rivalries will continue to produce conflict, varying from individual acts of terrorism to gigantic armed struggles spreading over all the oceans and continents of the world.

SOCIALISM: A WORLD WITHOUT WAR

To achieve Socialism the working class must wake up to reality and stop sleepwalking into yet more nightmares of terror. Not just to oppose war but to oppose capitalism, the cause of war, and to organise, worldwide, to end capitalism and establish Socialism through class-conscious, democratic, political action.

The SPGB repeats a statement we issued on the outbreak of war in 1914:

Having no quarrel with the working class of any country, we extend to our fellow workers in all lands, the expression of our goodwill and socialist fraternity and pledge ourselves to work for the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of Socialism.

The SPGB, August 25th 1914

Workers of the World, Unite!

Instead of merely protesting against war and its horrors, we urge you to join us in working to get rid of the social and political conditions which inevitably cause wars.

[NOTE: copies of this A4 leaflet are available on request.]

POLITICAL LEADERS

As the Tories struggle – yet again – to choose another leader and, as Blair becomes increasingly like an ex-leader, Sir Peregrine Worsthorne, in a speech (THE INDEPENDENT, 6 November 2005), let the cat out of the bag:

“...a party which champions policies that are in danger of sounding mean and ungenerous must lean over backwards to have leaders who do not look or sound mean or ungenerous. The nastier the policies, the nicer – in the sense of better-mannered, better-bred, sweeter tongued, in a word more gentlemanly - must be the politicians and journalists who espouse them.”

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Misrepresenting Marx: The BBC's Track Record

From the plush offices of the INDEPENDENT, a leader-writer recently scribbled out his thoughts on Chinese capitalism. He weighed up the pros and cons and came out in favour of a country that he thought was “*lifting millions out of poverty*”. His conclusion (6 September 2005) encapsulated the thinking of the 1980s: “*greed is good*” and was evidence of “*the market virtue of the trickle-down effect from rich to poor*”.

The editorial is political dogma writ large. And it is wholly specious. Similar views can be found in the writings of the Manchester free trade school of economists in early 19th century Britain to justify capitalism’s alleged benefits for the working class. Marx answered the free-traders in two ways. First, he showed the shallowness of the argument that economic growth was beneficial to all classes, and second, he argued that the generation of social wealth under capitalism originated from class exploitation at the point of production.

A house may be large or small; as long as the surrounding houses are equally small it satisfies all social demand for a dwelling. But let a palace arise beside a little house, and it shrinks from a little house to a hut. The little house shows now that its owner has only very slight or no demands to make; and however high it may shoot up in the course of civilisation, if the neighbouring palace grows to an equal or even greater extent, the occupant of the relatively small house will feel more and more uncomfortable, dissatisfied and cramped within its four walls.

A noticeable increase in wages presupposes a rapid growth of productive capital. The rapid growth of the productive forces brings about an equally rapid growth of wealth, luxury, social wants, social enjoyments. This, although the enjoyments of the worker has risen, the social satisfaction that they give has fallen in comparison with the increased enjoyments of the capitalist, which are inaccessible to the worker, in comparison with the state of development of society in general.

Our desires and pleasures spring from society; we measure them, therefore, by society and not by the objects which serve for their satisfaction. Because they are of a social nature, they are of a relative nature (Marx, WAGE-LABOUR AND CAPITAL, 1849).

Wherever the capital-labour relationship exists, there are antagonistic class interests, class exploitation and class struggle. This state of affairs applies equally, regardless of whether the employer is the state, a corporation, a privately owned business or a private capitalist.

The ‘trickle-down effect’ is perhaps one of the greatest insults thrown at the working class. The implication is that the working class should be grateful to the capitalist class for employing them and allowing them to share part of the social wealth produced. In reality, wealth is created by the working class. What goes to the capitalist class as rent, interest and profit is unearned income. The capitalists are a parasitical class. The crumbs falling to the floor from their table might become bigger over time but they are still crumbs.

In any event, the theory simply is not true. The annual Human Development Report by the UN (published September 2005) shows that, while China is very successful in wealth creation, it has not enabled the poor to share in the process. A rapid decline in child mortality has therefore not materialised. Of course, the UN report does not highlight the fact that this wealth creation came from the exploitation of the working class.

When has an employer ever fallen over himself to meet the interest of his workers by voluntarily giving them higher pay and better working conditions? Workers have to struggle for higher wages and better working conditions. Workers use trade unions and the strike to further their economic interests.

The reality of Chinese capitalism

The reality of Chinese capitalism is an altogether different from the rosy picture painted by the Independent leader writer. The workers from the countryside who have arrived in the cities have largely escaped from absolute poverty and oppression. Yet they work in the factories to punishing quota systems before they collapse into bed in their company-provided dormitories in the purpose-built factory towns that they hardly ever leave.

According to the journalist, Deborah Orr:

Typically, they'll get two days off a month, and a ten-day holiday at Chinese New Year. Even though they get a pittance for their labours, they feel rich, partly because they are earning 10 times what they would from working on the land, and partly because they have no time or energy left over to spend any of their money anyway (INDEPENDENT, 7 September 2005).

In an article, *Expose of Poverty in China Shames Regime* (THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, 25 February 2004), Richard Spencer also highlighted the sufferings of nearly one billion peasant farmers. A mass exodus is taking place which sees workers and their families driven into cities, to low-paid, often dangerous, jobs in the booming coastal provinces, or to equally low-paid jobs as migrant labourers in Europe and America.

Remember the 18 Chinese cockle-pickers who drowned at Morecambe Bay? Were they the beneficiaries of free market Chinese capitalism, so beloved by politicians and the media? They did not see the ‘trickle-down effect’ in China, and wanted out. But, in migrating, they simply went from the frying pan into the fire. Rather than being lifted out of poverty, workers in China are still in poverty, as wage-slaves locked within the exploitative wages system.

Of course, the DAILY TELEGRAPH wanted to have a poke at ‘Communist’ China. Yet China has as much to do with Marx’s Communism as Hitler’s Germany had with Darwin’s theory of evolution. There has never been in China, or for that matter anywhere else in the world, common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all the people.

The SPGB Vindicated

Ever since Mao’s revolution in 1949, The SPGB has shown that China was a state capitalist country, and could only develop along lines determined by commodity production and exchange for profit. The working class in China were exploited in the same way as their fellow workers were exploited elsewhere in the world.

The social relationships which now dominate China are those of wage labour and capital, the peasant class having been turned into rural wage-workers. The great majority of the population are members of the propertyless working class, forced to live by selling their labour power

The workers in China are exploited in the way Marx described in CAPITAL. They produce a “*surplus value*”. They endure exploitation through both absolute and relative surplus value. They are constrained by the wages system. They are forced into wage slavery by not owning and controlling the means of production.

As a consequence they receive a wage that barely sustains them and their families. And, as a class, they produce profit for capital, whether state or private, in excess of this wage.

The working class in China work under dreadful conditions of exploitation. Take the case of the coal industry. Digging out coal has cost the lives of more than 15 miners a day in China since the beginning of 2004 (BBC NEWS, 12 August 2005).

There have been 3000 deaths in mining accidents in the first six months from the beginning of 2005 (BBC RADIO, 4 September 2005). The employers have a ready-made source of replacement for the dead miners from the poor rural workers being swept off the land. Marx called it an industrial reserve army.

Workers in China cannot even legally organise into trade unions to struggle for better pay and working conditions. Amnesty International reported (April 2002):

Throughout March and April 2002, workers’ protests, strikes, demonstrations or factory occupations by disgruntled workers in China have been reported nearly every day. News of industrial accidents in which workers are killed or maimed are also frequently reported.

In many cases, peaceful protests by workers over pay and benefits have turned into pitched battles between the workers and armed police called to quell the protests, resulting in casualties and arrests. Labour activists have been arrested and often beaten. Some have been sentenced to long terms in prison.

History shows that the law and state oppression cannot prevent workers organising together against a common class enemy, striking for better pay and working conditions, and even carrying on political activity as Socialists. The class struggle continues, even under severe political restrictions. Imprisonment and legal enactments cannot stop the class struggle. It is a fact of life under capitalism whether in China or in Britain.

Free-loading with Tony

So what about all the Maoist students of the 1970s who used to man the bookshops in London and other British cities? The bookshops selling Mao’s pathetic thoughts have been replaced by the rants of Islamic extremists – although to hold any barmy religious belief is an extreme act of stupidity. A few ex-Maoists are now found in ‘New’ Labour in smart suits, drinking smart wine – Chablis bourgeois is a fitting name for the wine they drink – and dining in exclusive restaurants.

A few of New Labour’s elite might have flown with the free-loader, Tony Blair, to China on a trade mission. They will not have been reading the thoughts of Chairman Mao but planning how to get British capital profitably invested in China, how to resolve the bra-wars, and how to make sure that British capitalism was well represented.

And well-represented it was. With Tony Blair were Sir Martin Sorrell (Chief Executive of WPP, Lord Foster (millionaire corporate architect to the rich), Sir Anthony Bamford (chairman of JCB), Jan Du Plessis (chairman of British American Tobacco), and Lord Powell of Bayswater, a former foreign policy advisor to Margaret Thatcher and now president of the China-British Business Council.

As they flew over China, they looked down on a country ripe for business opportunities and profit. A £1.5 billion Air Bus deal was one prize to be had, against fierce competition from the US. Off-loading cigarettes was another.

The delegation had no interest in free trade unions, the health and welfare of the working class in China, let alone the establishment of a socialist party with the abolition of the wages system and socialism as its only aim.

They did not see the conditions which the working class of China have to endure. They did not see the deaths and the bodies bought out of the mines. They just saw the profit.

Chinese Capitalism Kills

Capitalism kills. You will not hear this fact, though, from politicians, economists and journalists. And you will certainly not hear it from Chinese politicians who are in political denial, erroneously believing that their country is not capitalist. But the Chinese government has been shamed into admitting the deaths caused by China's economic boom.

In 2004, there were 136,700 recorded industrial deaths in China (Chinese News Service, reported by CNN, 23 September 2005). According to official figures, 6,027 Chinese miners were killed last year alone, about 16 deaths a day. According to CNN, these figures are incomplete because mine operators often fail to report the deaths and “*pay off family members to keep them quiet*”.

Deaths in Chinese coal mining since 1995 are reported as follows:

Mining Deaths in China

1995 5,990 dead

2002 5,791 dead

2004 5,990 dead

Sources:

Official government figures, IEA, and CHINA LABOUR BULLETIN

Such deaths will not stop the flow of investments into China from capitalists in the West, nor the enthusiasm by economists for China's growth rate.

There is no morality in profit-making. The working class, whether dead or alive, have never mattered to the “dismal science” of capitalist economics. As Marx noted (Capital vol. I, chap. XXIV), in all capitalist countries, the “*cash nexus*” is everything, and for the capitalists:

Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!... Accumulate for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake.

Chinese capitalism is no different.

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In the Steps of Marx

Capitalism is riddled through with competing interests. The primary antagonism is between the capitalist class who own the means of production and the working class who do not. The resultant class struggle between capital and labour is, therefore, over the intensity and extent of exploitation. Politically, the class struggle is about the retention or abolition of capitalism.

However, different sections of the capitalist class have different interests. There are those who favour inflation, others deflation, and others a stable economy. Then there is the conflict between those who are importers and those who export. Some prefer high interest rates, others low interest rates. The capitalist political parties are but expressions of differing capitalist interests, largely around taxation and subsidy. And there is the international rivalry between nation states over trade routes, spheres of influence and raw resources.

Two interest groups are currently slugging it out; advocates of free trade and supporters of protectionism. The US is

in favour of free trade but protects its steel industry. There is a trade war between the EC and China, leading to stockpiles of bras and other imports of clothes in European ports and customs warehouses.

Both factions call upon the working class for support. For example, a supporter of free trade, Stephen King, wrote that: *“Free trade is not perfect, but it’s all we’ve got”* (INDEPENDENT, 12 September 2005). He went on to say that: *“workers may feel threatened but consumers benefit from lower prices”*. Free Traders have been saying this since the Corn Laws. They say nothing about the fact that workers are exploited at the point of production, whether there is free trade or protectionism.

Such calls for and against free trade should be ignored. The working class has no concern in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole or its various factions. The working class interest should be directed at abolishing capitalism and replacing the profit system with Socialism. Instead of free trade and protectionism, the workers should be politically and consciously organising for no trade: that is, the abolition of buying and selling, markets and production for profit.

Free Trade and Protectionism

Free trade has been a dominant trend since Adam Smith and his disciples who believed that there was no need to produce a commodity if it could be bought more cheaply from abroad.

David Ricardo was also a supporter of free trade with his theory of comparative advantage. After the wars against Napoleon and revolutionary France, which included trade blockades, Ricardo’s argument for free trade became seductive. John Stuart Mill even believed that protectionism actually damaged economies.

In 19th century Britain, Cobden and Bright spread free trade like a religion. According to Marx, one Dr. Browning: *“conferred upon all these (free-trade) arguments the consecration of religion by exclaiming at a meeting, “Jesus Christ is free trade, and free trade is Jesus Christ”* (ON THE QUESTION OF FREE TRADE, p196).

After Robert Peel split the Tory Party over cheap food imports, the movement for the repeal of the Corn Laws won out against protectionism. When British capitalism was the *“workshop of the world”*, free trade was considered acceptable to much of the capitalist class.

However, once British capitalism found itself in competition from abroad, the Conservative politician, Joseph Chamberlain, called for protection. Ironically, one of the first propaganda films produced in 1903, in support for protectionism was called *“Fair Trade”*, a phrase now taken over by the latter day protectionists in the anti-capitalism movement.

And so the pendulum swings: at times towards free trade, at others towards protectionism.

Free traders like Ricardo ask: *“Why cannot the whole world go over to complete free-trade by abolishing all tariffs and all restrictions on imports and exports?”* If this were done, they say, then all commodities would be produced in those places where it is easiest and most economical to produce them, each area would concentrate on those commodities in which it had a natural or acquired advantage, and the world as a whole would be enriched and would escape the conflicts that presently effect capitalism.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have studied the proposals for free trade and have given support. However, free trade is not a practical proposition, and the realities of capitalism have always subverted the doctrine.

Although free trade supporters have no understanding of capitalism, they cannot disregard the consequences of capitalism. This was the problem faced by the free trader, Peter Mandelson, when considering the threat to EC capitalist interests from cheap imports from China. The introduction of international free trade would mean, as its supporters intend that it should, the closing down of some industries in other countries and the corresponding growth in other countries.

It would involve the ending of glass manufacture in Italy to China, of clothing manufacture in France and Germany to China and so on. The result would be bankruptcy and unemployment in Italy, France and Germany.

But behind each industry there are vested interests which do not want to see their particular investments destroyed by foreign competition. Capitalists would oppose being deprived of their property and profits. They would get the support of their non-socialist workers by spreading propaganda about high unemployment. There would be politicians willing to give support.

There is also another problem about capitalism overlooked by free traders like Ricardo. And that is the problem of war. Each nation state has to be in a position to wage war. It cannot afford to lose to free trade industries which might be needed to produce arms.

Dominance in capitalism rests in the last resort on the power to wage war and that in turn rests on the possession of war industries such as steel, engineering and aircraft production. Which is why an advocate of free trade like President Bush sees nothing contradictory in subsidising and protecting those industries useful for the US to take its place in the world as a super-power.

It is precisely to guard against being put in a vulnerable position that every government encourages by tariffs, restrictions, subsidies and so on, the building-up within its borders, or under its protection, of the industries without which modern war cannot be waged.

The protectionist argument is similarly impractical. Economic theory, time and time, again comes up against the realities of capitalism and is found wanting.

Protectionism is impractical for the same reasons as free trade though it would work in the opposite direction. Under free trade, the weakest and least profitable industries would go to the wall. Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair both support this view: both are Manchester free traders – as the Labour Party and trade unions once were until the Webbs. The Labour Party took over free trade policies as successors to the Whigs/Liberals. In the 19th century, the Tories, representing the landed interest, advocated protection (e.g. the Corn Laws), while the Whigs, representing manufacturers' interests, and wanting low wages, hence a low price of bread, advocated the repeal of the Corn Laws, and free trade policies which also helped their export trade. Labour is defined always mainly by its opposition to the Tories: when Tories advocate protection – later defined as Empire/Commonwealth preference – Labour put themselves forward as free trade enthusiasts. This is an example of Labour adopting the employers' policies, of Labour and the TUC identifying with the employers' interests.

Under protectionism, it would be the large and powerful export industries that would have to cut back on their economic activity. Such a proposal would be fought tooth and nail by export capitalists and their political representatives.

Both free trade and protectionism are two sides of the same capitalist coin. They both hold the same untenable illusion that you can organise capitalism to minimise conflict. And they peddle the lie that their economic theory should be supported by the working class. As Marx and socialists have shown, capitalism can never be run in the interests of the working class, whether under conditions of free trade or protectionism.

Marx and Free Trade

A few months before the publication of the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, Marx gave a speech to the Democratic Association of Brussels stating his considered views on free trade. Marx ridiculed the idea that the capitalists were philanthropists whose “*sole and express purpose*” was “*improving the condition of these same workingmen*” (p197). Marx pointed out that the working class has its own interests. He also pointed out that capitalism, with or without free trade: “*passes through the successive phases of prosperity, overproduction, crisis...*” (p197).

Free trade, for Marx, is nothing more than the freedom of capital.

So long as you [the Free Trader] let the relation of wage-labour to capital exist, no matter how favourable the

conditions under which you accomplish the exchange of commodities, there will always be a class which exploits and a class which is exploited (p205).

Marx ridiculed the belief that free trade would abolish the class struggle between workers and capitalists. He concluded that the class struggle will stand out more clearly under conditions of free trade. Marx saw in early 19th century free trade a force that was useful in breaking down the last remnants of feudalism. He saw free trade as a means of hastening the Social Revolution. Marx was over-optimistic. There have been free trade and protectionist policies for 157 years and, although the class struggle has persisted, the working class are still tied to capital.

Socialism and No Trade

The SPGB has never treated what Marx said as a religious utterance. The SPGB stands or falls on our Object and Declaration of Principles. There is nothing “*progressive*” now in free trade. Socialists are not in favour of free trade any more than Socialists are in favour of protectionism. Our work is directed towards building up a Socialist majority necessary to abolish capitalism and establish Socialism.

And by Socialism we mean the abolition of labour markets, the buying and selling of labour power, the private ownership of the means of production and the class relationship between capital and labour. In short, Socialists do not want trade at all, whether “*free*” or “*protected*”.

Socialism means the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. Production will be purely for social use and not profit. Workers will never have their needs met while being tied to capital. Only Socialism will allow their potential to be realised. Opponents of Socialism cannot or will not get outside their “*bourgeois*” skin, and understand the reasonable and practical socialist proposition about production and distribution.

The proposition is that world resources will be used without the impediment of national boundaries to feed, clothe, house and sustain the entire population of the globe. Social need will be met whenever and wherever it exists.

Our opponents, whether supporters of Free Trade or protectionism, cannot conceive of a world without trade because their minds are closed to anything but commodity production and exchange for profit. Their minds are so polluted by ruling-class ideas and beliefs that they cannot conceive of anything but capitalism.

Let opponents of Socialism keep their ideas and beliefs. In the face of a power socialist movement they are irrelevant. The working class has nothing to lose in embracing consciously and politically revolutionary change. To meet the needs of all people requires freedom from capital and the profit motive. Freedom is only a revolution away.

If the lesson of free trade and protectionism can teach the working class anything, it is that capitalism can never be made to work in their interests, and that Socialism is the only answer to their problems.

THE CAPITALIST WORLD-MARKET

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all... nations into civilisation. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls... It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production... In one word, it creates a world after its own image.

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural... The bourgeoisie...has agglomerated population, centralised means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The necessary consequence of this was political centralisation.

Marx and Engels, THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

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International Communist Current: Absurdities (Part 2)

Lenin, the anti-Socialist

It might be thought that, having stumbled across the golden formula for social change, the masterminds of the ICC would be storming ahead and their objectives (whatever they are) would be in sight. But where are they? They have achieved nothing. If the working class have thus far not produced a conscious majority ready for Socialism, they also ignore the self-appointed ICC “*vanguard*”.

Wild assertion is their “*strong*” suit. For example, they accuse the Socialist Party of Great Britain of supporting bourgeois democracy and thereby, becoming agents of the capitalist system.

Even the most rabid bourgeois intellectuals have never stooped to such pitiful claptrap.

While they were casting Stalin as a degenerate “... *ideologically the proletariat was crushed by the victory of democracy and Stalinism*” (Part 4, page 3) they missed a great opportunity to tell us the names of all the opposition political parties and their publications, that existed in Russia, after their tin-gods, Lenin and Trotsky seized power. They were crushed before Stalin was even heard of outside the Bolshevik gang. If the ICC are looking for degenerates they did not have to wait for Stalin, Lenin and Trotsky meet all the requirements.

It was Lenin who said in 1922:

“the more members of the reactionary bourgeoisie and clergy we manage to shoot the better”.
THE PENGUIN HISTORY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY by J M Roberts, page 295

Roberts makes the case that:

“They (the Bolsheviks) had to start with a country that was in Marxist terms not ready for revolution; it was the most backward of all the great powers, still overwhelmingly a rural, peasant society, illiterate and even primitive”

“... people of many different nations, ethnic stocks and tongues” (page 293)

Has Mr Roberts been reading what the SPGB was saying at the time of the revolution, or can it be that the ICC are among the few still believing in historic miracles?

In 1921 it was Trotsky that crushed the rebellion of the Kronstadt navel base. The demands of the sailors had been “... *for democratic elections, freedom of speech and the press, and the release of all political prisoners*”. Under Trotsky’s direction “*surviving mutineers being swiftly and ruthlessly shot*” (page 294).

Trotsky was acting as Lenin’s executioner. The ruthlessness at Kronstadt was typical of how Lenin and his stooges seized and held on to power. The dreaded secret police of the Tsars were rapidly replaced by the Cheka, a series of name changes made no difference to their function, which continued throughout the whole period of Bolshevik dictatorship. It should be remembered that these were the same Kronstadt sailors who had brandished their rifles under the noses of the democratically elected General Assembly delegates, when Lenin closed it down because the Bolsheviks were in a minority. This was the end of opposition in capitalist Russia for 74 years. These are the historic anti-working class conditions which the backward ICC would like to see repeated around the world today.

In that impoverished, backward country, after four years of Lenin in power, more than 5 million died of starvation in the most appalling conditions where some were reduced to cannibalism. If Lenin could not control drought, Russia’s pig-iron production in 1921 was about one-fifth of the 1913 level, while coal production was around a mere 3 per cent. It was 1928 (four years after Lenin’s death) before industrial and agricultural production reached pre-war

levels.
(See Page 295, HISTORY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY)

Lenin wrote WHAT IS TO BE DONE? Long before the “*revolution*”. On page 31 this prime piece of contempt appears:

“We have said that there could not have been Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively, by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness ...”.

According to Lenin, Socialist theory arose independently of the working class movement:

“... it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought among the revolutionary Socialist intelligentsia” (Page 32).

This is completely anti-Marxist. For Marx and Engels Socialism is “*the self-conscious movement of the immense majority*”. COMMUNIST MANIFESTO.

Marx and Engels did not “*invent*” anything. They discovered the class struggle as the key to all recorded history. For them the special historical product of capitalism is the working class with its potential to finally end class society. Socialist consciousness comes from the interaction of class forces in political economy. The fanciful nonsense of Lenin about the development of thought among revolutionary intellectuals is what spawned “*vanguardism*”, which sees the proletarian masses as the plaything of professional, self-styled leaders.

The fact that the ICC endorse this insult to the working class shows how little they have learned from a hundred years of Bolshevik theory and practice.

TRANSITION WAR AND REVOLUTION

The so-called “*transition period*” is another Leninist stumbling block found irresistible by the self-appointed vanguard of the ICC. In their promised land, the Soviet Union, it was a transition to nowhere with no final destination.

The changes Lenin imagined in 1916 capitalism were supposed to herald the transition from capitalism to Socialism and were thought by him to be revealing themselves all along the line. Since there was no growth of Socialist awareness anywhere in Europe or, indeed the world, Lenin was left to seize power in backward Russia and build a single-party, police-state, capitalist dictatorship.

The working class of Germany, the rest of Europe, the UK and America came out of the blood-soaked trenches, where they had been slaughtering each other for four years to be greeted by dole-queues and pawn-brokers for twenty years until it was the turn of their sons, still clutching their masters flags and instilled with perverse nationalism, to go and do it all again.

The ICC fantasize about a “*revolutionary wave that followed WWI*” and in their dementia take the Socialist Party of Great Britain to task for “*failure to respond adequately*” to it. (Part 4, Page 3)

Clearly, they know nothing about what revolution means. The first world war ended 87 years ago. Generations have come and gone. Since 1918 we have had WWII and another 30 million killed for the predatory interests of the world’s capitalist class. The “*revolutionary wave*” seems to have missed them completely, as it did the many millions more who have died in wars between the two world wars and since 1945.

When they eventually get round to recording that the Socialist Party of Great Britain in fact opposed both world wars (and all the “*lesser*” ones) they belittle this as best they can. The fact that in both cases, the very first issue of THE SOCIALIST STANDARD after the outbreak condemned the wars in favour of world working class unity for

Socialism is played down.

They clearly do not have original copies not do they have the superb 1936 pamphlet WAR AND THE WORKING CLASS. The full text of both WAR statements are available in current pamphlets. They repeat out-of-context quotes seeking to discredit the Party in relation to the Spanish Civil War. They refer to members going on the run in WWI and WWII, as if this meant they abandoned Socialism. They clearly know nothing of members such as Moses Baritz and Adolph Kohn, who went to America and tirelessly carried on outdoor and indoor meetings, as well as conducting education classes. Other members went to prison rather than help slaughter their fellow workers. Workers were told the war was for “*freedom*”. But freedom did not extend to saying no!

ICC mock the difficulty the Party experienced holding out-door meetings during WWI. They suggest no way of preventing patriotic thugs from smashing up such meetings.

If their scribe had read THE MONUMENT a little less selectively he would have found that, however much arguments raged about the issue of democracy and war and the position of the Party, the conclusion is irrefutable. The Socialist Party of Great Britain has never supported any war. And despite people like Jacomb, this applies to the Spanish Civil War. Chapter II details how the Party dealt with a number of individuals who argued compromising points of view and shows that the Party not only maintained its opposition to WWII, but that by the autumn of 1946 outdoor meetings were growing again. Jacomb was eventually expelled and with hindsight no doubt should have been expelled much sooner.

It is inevitable that, in an atmosphere of intense war hysteria, the Party will be affected by the world outside. This has only served to test the soundness of the Party’s case and principles, which have prevailed.

If, as has often been repeated, “*Truth is the first casualty in any war*”, then democracy is a very close second. Despite the oppression, as a Party the SPGB stuck to its position, not one of pacifism but of the unity of world working class interest. Even the ICC quotes excerpts from what the Party said at the outbreak of the Second World War, noting: “*... the futility of war as a means of safeguarding democracy*” and urging workers “*... to recognise that only Socialism will end war*”. They also quote the 1936 pamphlet, WAR AND THE WORKING CLASS

“War ... solves no problem of the working class. Victory and defeat alike leave them in the same position”

“They have no interest at stake which justifies giving support to war.”

Pages 16-17

This was published at the time of the Spanish Civil War. Do the ICC challenge any of these propositions?

THE MONUMENT also describes how it was Tony Turner, speaking for the SPGB on the Sunday after war broke out, who did a marathon stint in Hyde Park lasting all day, condemning the war. It would be false to conclude that Turner or any other individual determined the Party’s case against war. This was detailed at the outbreak of war in 1914. Although obviously the statement referred specifically to WWI, the very terms used demonstrate that opposition to war was a “*reaffirmation*” derived from our principles. The war was denounced as a “*thieves’ quarrel*” with the declaration “*... that no interests are at stake justifying the shedding of a single drop of working class blood...*”. That this has applies to all wars, has always been obvious to the SPGB.

The statement concludes:

“Having no quarrel with the working class of any country, we extend to our fellow workers of all lands the expression of our goodwill and Socialist fraternity, and pledge ourselves to work for the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of Socialism!

The World for the Workers!”

August 25th 1914: THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE”

*“Wage workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to win! **Marx**”*

Astoundingly, by a process of creative reasoning known only to the ICC, this Socialist opposition to capitalism and its wars becomes:

“ ... the SPGB’s opposition to the war remained trapped in the individualist and essentially pacifist refusal to participate in the war and, hence, within the framework of bourgeois ideology”. (Part 3, page 5) also:

“ ... a virtual accommodation with the bourgeois state during the Second World War, when it was used by the ruling class ...”. Part 4, page 3)

We have seen what the Socialist Party of Great Britain was doing in Hyde Park on that Sunday in September 1939. It is also relevant to recall what the so-called Communist Party (womb-mates of the ICC) were doing. They were supporting the war against Germany! This support was, however, short-lived as it was out-of-step with Stalin’s pact with Hitler of August 1939. By the 4th of October 1939 the Daily Worker was declaring: “We are against the continuance of the war”. The war then became an “imperialist war” with the CP publishing pamphlets such as WHY THIS WAR? Then, when Hitler attacked their Soviet motherland in June 1941, the war once again became a war against fascism and workers were urged to the slaughter. Their cue was always taken from Russia (like the ICC), not the interests of the working class.

Democracy, Marx and Socialism

We have become accustomed over many years to being told by the leftists that if Socialism gained enough votes to threaten the system the capitalists would simply close down Parliament. The ICC has another variation to avoid having to spread Socialist understanding. Referring to the Party and democracy, they say:

“But its palpable concessions to bourgeois ideology – above all to the central capitalist myth of democracy – could lead it to side directly with the bourgeoisie when the working class is concretely faced with the necessity to destroy the whole apparatus of the capitalist state, not least its parliamentary façade.” (Part 4, page 3)

Since the capitalist state is an armed, coercive edifice, it is suicidal stupidity to talk of destroying it. Why do ICC not just get on with it? If they need a majority they should have the intelligence to realise it is this that makes Socialism possible. Parliament is only a façade today because the majority of workers vote for capitalist parties. Ironically, the ICC does not object to this since they do not reject reformism. These latter-day Leninists might also wonder why the Bolsheviks in 1917 Russia did not destroy the whole apparatus of the capitalist state? In fact, on the contrary, starting with Lenin and Trotsky, they built the most redoubtable centralised state machine the world has ever seen. For Lenin and the Bolsheviks the issue was never that of gaining a majority of workers ready to organise consciously for Socialism, it was always a matter of removing obstacles to their power. Their monolithic state did this for three-quarters of a century.

As far as capitalist democracy is concerned, as the term implies, it is the democracy of the capitalists, allowing for the expression of the sectional differences within that class. It is a limited and restrained democracy catering to the needs of a parasite ruling class. The press, radio and television are controlled and allow of no expression of working class interests in terms of their emancipation and the struggle for Socialism. Marx and Engels argue that the capitalists are “ ... compelled to appeal to the proletariat to ask for its help and thus to drag it into the political arena. The bourgeoisie itself, therefore, supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education, in other words, it furnishes the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie” COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, pages 23-24.

And:

“We have seen above that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.” (page 39)

The Socialist Party of Great Britain does not delude itself about capitalist democracy. We have always stressed that the vital factor currently missing, is Socialist awareness. Without this there can be no Socialism; once it has taken

hold change is irresistible.

“The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority” page 26.
Capitalism is here because of the workers, not despite them.

Democracy in the full sense of a free society of social equality, with no class privilege restricting information and expression, will not exist until Socialism classless-society is established. The revolution will start democratically and future society will continue to be democratic just as vanguardism starts with elitism and continues to be autocratic when running capitalism.

The whole position of the ICC is quite untenable and their inability to grasp the nature of democracy creates a further impasse for them. Their contempt for the democratic voting process has repercussions for their own internal organisation.

In their journal, No. 276, they report having gone through a serious crisis because of a disruptive *“parasite group”* in their ranks; this group had been *“... devoted to destroying the ICC’s unitary and centralised principles of functioning”* (page 6). This happened at one of their conferences.

Are we to imagine that at such gatherings of the vanguard there is no voting on anything? How do they know that the *“Internal Fraction”* were not in fact the majority, without voting? The only way of knowing the majority view is by counting. Is the self-appointed vanguard itself told what they stand for by the *“centralised”* chief-vanguard, also self-appointed?

We challenge the ICC to debate and offer them a selection of titles –

1. Was Lenin a Marxist?
2. Was Lenin a Socialist?
3. Does Bolshevism mean Socialism?
4. Vanguard or Democracy for Emancipation?

It is time for the ICC to put up or shut up!

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A Socialist's Protest

There is a spectre haunting the capitalist class. And that spectre is Karl Marx.

The capitalist class thought they had got rid of Marx following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Lenin was certainly eclipsed. Who reads Lenin any more? But go into the main bookshops, and Marx is in the classics section or in the politics section. If his books were not being bought, they would not be on the shelves to be sold. He is required reading in universities. His ideas still matter because his analysis of capitalism is on the ball.

So it comes as no surprise to read Professor John Gray bemoaning the fact that Marx’s ideas are alive and well. In a review of Terry Eagleton’s book, *HOLY TERROR*, John Gray wrote:

... He [Terry Eagleton] has a blind spot when it comes to terror perpetrated in the service of Socialist ideals (INDEPENDENT, 16 September 2005).

In his book, Eagleton argued that *“socialists have always rejected the tactics of terror”*, as indeed they have from the inception of The SPGB in 1904 onwards. Professor Gray responded: *“as if Lenin was a fringe figure in the history of Socialism and in no way involved in constructing the Soviet apparatus of state terror”*.

But Lenin was involved in the construction and use of state terror. The Cheka was his invention. It has been

estimated that between 100,000 and 500,000 people were executed by the Cheka during the Red Terror.

Although the secret police was officially formed as the Cheka (VChK: the Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counterrevolution and Sabotage) in December 1917, shortly after the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, its origins go back to the earliest tsarist times. Ivan the Terrible, Russia's first Tsar, established his secret police, the Oprichniki in 1565.

In 1924 the Cheka was renamed the OGPU or United State Political Administration. Dzerzhinsky and most of the leaders of the old Cheka remained in the new GPU. Like the Tsarist secret police, the Okhrana under Nicholas II, the GPU was made a part of the Ministry of Interior (MVD), where it stayed in its many guises for the following decades.

But Lenin was no Socialist. He rejected Marx's central political idea that Socialism was to be the work of the working class alone. Lenin thought that Socialism could be imposed by a dedicated minority elite of professional revolutionaries.

Lenin was utterly wrong. Socialism cannot be imposed by an elite any more than Socialism can grow out of a backward, peasant-based society

Gray ended his review with this contemptuous remark:

It may be Eagleton subscribes to the academic cliché that the former Soviet Union had nothing to do with socialism but was another version of Russian despotism

Well, Professor Gray knows about the existence of The SPGB. He has been invited to debate against The SPGB but cites as his reason not to debate as his being "too busy". He also should know that The SPGB, from 1918 onwards, demonstrated that the Soviet Union had nothing to do with Socialism but everything to do with state capitalism. We know this because he has been sent Socialist literature to support this fact.

Professor Gray is just another dogmatist who does not want to let reality into his cosy world of fiction. Here is his pitiful argument against Eagleton's belief that Socialism cannot be established through terror:

... this runs against the awkward fact that state terror has been a feature of all communist [sic] regimes. Soviet Mongolia, the German Democratic Republic and Stalinist Poland had very different cultures, but during the communist [sic] era all suffered show trials, mass imprisonment and a ubiquitous secret police. Terror cost many more lives in Russia and China than elsewhere, but one reason for this is that, for a time, the communist [sic] programme was carried out further in them than in other countries. The millions of people who died there did so not because the communist [sic] project was compromised or deformed but because it was consistently pursued.

Socialists do not deny that the countries Professor Gray highlights did indulge in show trials, mass imprisonment and a "ubiquitous" secret police.

But, and here is the point, there was no communist programme actively being pursued. No state capitalist country had a programme of common ownership of the means of production and distribution by all of society; the abolition of the wages system, and a society of free men and women producing to meet need.

The utopianism of state capitalism, that a party elite could create a society which met the needs of all society, was flawed from the beginning. You can force a person through terror to do a lot of things; to kill others, to degrade themselves, to march behind weapons of mass destruction, to cheer leaders, and to remain cowed and humiliated. But what you cannot force them to do is to become a socialist.

In Russia and its empire, the working class were tied to capital. In fact Lenin introduced the capitalist managerial technique of "Taylorism". There were no Socialists in socialist parties actively calling for the abolition of the wages system. The programme pursued by the state was to keep the working class as a working class, not to liberate it from employers. And, of course, the constant feature found in countries like Russia, when state capitalism passed on into

more private hands, was a non-socialist working class still pumping out surplus value to create profits. The other constant feature was the use of the state machinery to protect the means of production for the benefit of a few as opposed to the needs of the majority.

Politically, a principal feature of Socialist thought has been for the working class to set up political parties throughout the world with the express aim of abolishing the wages system. Where wages exist, there is class exploitation. This was demonstrated by Marx in CAPITAL and in his other writings. So, it does not matter whether a nation state describes itself as “*Communist*”, “*Socialist*”, “*Capitalist*” or “*Islamic*” because, from the interests of the working class, while the wages system exists, workers are experiencing exploitation. They produce more than they receive in wages and salaries. The needs of the working class go unmet.

The “*Socialist ideal*” is to get rid of class exploitation. Yet apologists like John Gray say very little about class exploitation. Communism/Socialism and politics generally is not something he believes the working class should get involved in. The working class should be led, preferably by people approved of by the likes of John Gray.

In many ways, John Gray shares the elitism of Lenin and those who followed Lenin. Politically, for the Grays of the world, the working class do not count for much. This was never the view of Marx: the working class were a central feature, acting as a “*class for itself*”.

Marx showed that the working class is an exploited class wherever the wages system exists, and that it has a unique class interest in acting consciously and politically to abolish the world-wide profit system, and replace it with a world-wide social system based on production for use. This is the case, whether the working class are found in a dictatorship or so-called liberal democracy, whether they are employed by the state, corporations, families or individuals. The point is that they remain an exploited class.

Socialism/Communism has therefore never existed. No working class majority understanding and desiring Socialism has ever existed - so far. As a consequence, Marx’s ideas are as relevant today for the working class as they were when he first published them. That is the terror that haunts the capitalist class. The nightmare which scares the wits from them is to be constantly surrounded by their gravediggers.

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'The Failings of Socialism'?

Prompted by the party’s centenary, the so-called Communist Party of Great Britain, or rather one of its fragments, has at last decided to join with the growing throng of muddled anti-socialists in writing inane criticisms of The SPGB.

They head their pitiful attack: “*100 Years of Solitude*”. Yes, the party of Socialism has studiously avoided the company of anti-socialist enemies of the working class, and these of course would include the so-called Communist Party.

Unlike the CPGB, The SPGB never bore allegiance to a foreign police-state dictatorship like the former Soviet Union, and so we have never had to disappear from public meeting places for weeks on end, as they did in 1956 when Soviet tanks rolled into Hungary to crush a rising against Russian tyranny. Neither did we have to hide while getting the “*party line*” right, when Russia crushed another revolt in Czechoslovakia in 1968, when Alexander Dubcek, the Czech leader, was flown to Moscow in handcuffs.

Taking their cue always from their Soviet masters, the CPGB changed their attitude to World War II three times.

First, they supported the war and posed as anti-fascists. Then, on 22 August 1939, when Soviet Russia made a pact of peace and friendship with Nazi Germany, they opposed the war, calling it an “*imperialist war*”, and published a pamphlet entitled “WHY THIS WAR?” Finally, when their Soviet motherland was attacked by Germany in June 1941, they published another pamphlet on “HOW TO WIN THE WAR”, and could not urge workers into the

slaughter loudly enough.

First, the DAILY WORKER in March 1939 headlined:

Communists appeal to Attlee, Sinclair and Churchill - urged to defeat cabinet and form new government.

Then when the Stalin/Hitler Pact came, Harry Pollitt and others made abject confessions of error for failing to see the imperialist nature of the war and, on 10 May 1940 when those three British leaders did form a government, the DAILY WORKER denounced Labour for associating with Churchill saying: “*What a man to take under the wing of the Labour Party!*” and urged workers to fight against Labour participation in Churchill’s new government. Quotations from QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, The SPGB pamphlet, 1953 edition

Yet only a year later, when Germany attacked Russia, the slavish CPGB returned to supporting the war, and Churchill’s government.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH (14 October 1941) recorded that a Communist deputation went to the Tory Headquarters at Lancaster to offer support for the National Conservative candidate in the by-election. Harry Pollitt spoke at Newark in support of the Tory candidate on 7 June 1943, and Willie Gallagher - an erstwhile commie MP - admitted their treachery in a 1945 General Election special saying:

In by-elections we have supported candidates whatever their particular label who were behind the government in carrying on the war through to a finish in alliance with the Soviet Union.
Quoted in QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, 1953 edition, p79

Pollitt’s and the CPGB’s line was in opposition to war-time strikes, claiming that “*strikes do not harm the employers...*” (Pollitt’s pamphlet, WHERE DOES BRITAIN STAND, p12, quoted in QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, p80))

In post-war years, when Russia’s relationship with Western capitalism worsened again, support for strikes and “*peace campaigns*” became CPGB policy.

Promoting Confusion

Following all these contortions was the Moscow-controlled Daily Worker, more renowned for its racing tips and sports news than for anything else. Frequently finding itself unable to keep pace with the twists and turns of Russia’s policy, Harry Pollitt and Palme Dutt had to make embarrassing retractions. Its readers had to buy another daily paper to have any idea of what was really happening in the world.

In 1920, at its inaugural Conference, the CPGB voted to seek affiliation with the Labour Party. For the next four years, they alternated between open opposition to and unconditional support for the anti-working class Labour Party.

International Anarchy

The so-called Third (Communist) International statutes were drawn up in Moscow in August 1920, and published in London by the CPGB. The *Statutes and Conditions of Affiliation* include the following:-

The aim of the Communist International is to organise an armed struggle for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and the establishment of an international Soviet Republic as a transition to the complete abolition of the Capitalist State. Quoted in QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, 1932 edition, p59

How many of their current members are aware of these failed aims? Not only has the CPGB failed to establish a Soviet Republic but their guiding light, the Soviet Union, has itself been extinguished. 80 years of wasted working-class time!

Lenin and the other Bolsheviks who wrote those statutes did not even know that the ‘abolition of the state’ is an anarchist aim, not a Socialist one (see Engels, letter to Cuno, 1872).

The CPGB helped popularise the lie of “*Socialism in One Country*”, and promoted the myth that Socialism was the ‘lower’ phase and Communism the ‘higher’ phase. They thus created the false distinction between the meaning of the two terms in order to explain away the obvious features of capitalism persisting in Russia, including a powerful state machine.

In so doing, they deliberately falsified Marx and Engels, who nowhere ever distinguished Socialism from Communism: see SOCIALISM, UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC, and THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO in the 1888 Preface to which Engels specifically says the terms mean the same thing.

The CP, from Lenin and Trotsky onwards, has been dedicated to promoting leaders: proof of their reliance upon working class ignorance since only the leaders know the way. It also shows that they have never stood for Socialism or understood its implications.

All historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious independent movement of the immense majority. THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

And Engels wrote, in his 1888 Preface to the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO:

... our notion, from the very beginning, was that the ‘emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself’.

It is very clear that the CPGB, as well as Lenin and the Bolsheviks, was a movement of a minority to gain power over workers, not the movement of a conscious majority to end power through emancipation.

Leftist Reformism is not Socialism

In their letter to us, our CP opponents describe The SPGB as “*the country’s oldest Marxist group*”. We reject the “*group*” designation, and if, by Marxist, they mean that we have one aim, Socialism, the abolition of capitalism together with the wages-system, markets and profits, to be achieved by the conscious political action of a working-class majority, then we are not only the oldest, but the *only* Marxist party in the UK.

Their scribe goes on to say that we are “*...regarded by the rest of the Left as a political fossil*”. Since the so-called “*Left*” in all its forms is reformist and The SPGB is revolutionary, we have never been part of the Left.

It is worth noting that part of the definition of a fossil is that it is “*unchanging*”. This is something that cannot be said of the opportunist CPGB and the rest of the Left. They have always changed with the prevailing wind, particularly if it blew from Russia, and they have all stood for anything and everything except Socialism.

Nowhere is the political ignorance of the CPGB more clearly illustrated than in their remarks about a Socialist Party being confined to propagandist and “*abstract campaigning for Socialism*”.

We are charged with believing: “*...the pursuit of class struggles for gains that can be won under capitalism is an unnecessary distraction from propagating the Socialist solution*”. This is the class reformist position. After more than eighty years, the CPGB still thinks the class struggle is about gains to win under capitalism. No examples are given of gains won under capitalism but, whatever these may be, they leave the workers still an exploited class of wage-slaves in a world of poverty and war. This is all the CPGB aspires to.

The class struggle is about the ownership and control of the means of production and distribution, about ending the exploitation of wage-labour by making the means of living the common property of society as a whole.

They evade the reality of their slavish history of following Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin, and they try to wriggle out of it with this statement:

The SPGB's belief that the SWP, SP, CPGB, etc think that Socialism can be established in Britain against the will of the majority and without mass workers' democracy is wishful thinking.

The fact is that none of those has ever advocated Socialism. Nationalisation, i.e. state capitalism, is what they frequently pass off as Socialism, plus day-to-day reforms in a “*meantime*” that lasts forever.

Their new-found love of ‘democracy’ should deceive nobody. Wherever they have held power, ‘democracy’ has come out of the barrel of a gun. Can they tell us, how many workers were shot in the back climbing over the Berlin Wall to escape from the joys of their Soviet paradise? Socialism for the CPGB meant Soviet H-Bomb rockets trundling through Red Square every May Day and October anniversary. They said that these weapons were for “*Peace and Socialism*”. They even lacked the self-respect to realise, that those rockets were pointed at them.

The SPGB challenges the CPGB to a public debate on “*Which Party Stands for Socialism*”.

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Object and Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is

diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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